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W. H. Finch

Grace Spencer -  
October 1937.

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BRITTANY AND LA VENDÉE.

TALES AND SKETCHES.

WITH A NOTICE OF THE LIFE AND LITERARY CHARACTER

OF

ÉMILE SOUVESTRE.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF ÉMILE SOUVESTRE.

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Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and taken thy wages.

IN one of the indentations of that western coast of France from which Finistère looks out on the Land's End, and whence the Breton sailor crosses to the Welsh, if not the Cornish shore, to find men of his own Celtic blood, and still able to parley with him in his own Celtic tongue, lie the little port and town of Morlaix. A romantic valley, with two mountain streams, is entered by the tidal creek on the waters of which sleep numerous coasting-vessels with their ruddy sails; around is grouped a double row of houses, projecting on grotesquely-carved posts and brackets over footways peopled by not less grotesque figures of men in trunk-hose, broad-brimmed penthouse hats, and shaggy, mane-like locks—and of women in their sombre nun-like garb of black and white, or in the blue dress which tells that the widow's thoughts and hopes are turned to heaven; while steep rocks and woody

hills crowned with gardens rise close behind. The "Saxons' Fountain" still marks the spot where the men of Morlaix made the forces of the Earl of Surrey pay dearly for the pillage, fire, and slaughter with which they had visited the town and its "right fair castles, goodly houses, and proper piles," according to the official report to Henry VIII. More dreamlike traditions of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table hover over this land, which still shows the ruin of the Castle of the Joyeuse Garde; and the earnest faith of the Breton Catholic is still strangely modified, not merely by the beliefs, but even by the rites of the Druids. In this not unfitting home for the painter of nature, men, and manners, Emile Souvestre was born, on the 15th of April 1806. His father was an engineer officer, whose narrow escape when the town of Chateaulaudrin was overwhelmed by the bursting out of the neighbouring lake, and his return from his official duty to find the corpse of his intended bride, in her ball-dress, still wearing the flower he had given her at parting, and with her hand still joined with that of a partner in the dance, are so graphically related by his son in *Les Derniers Bretons*. He had charge of the roads and bridges of the district; and, apparently with a view to educate the young Emile for the like employment, he sent him to the partly military and partly scientific college of Pontivy, where he remained till about the age of seventeen, not without showing some turn for mathematics. But then the father's death, and his mother's earnest wish that he should choose his future profession for himself, decided him to prefer the bar, as less remote from the pursuit of letters and philosophy, and perhaps as being at that mo-

ment illustrious in its examples of patriotism and independence. He therefore entered on a course of legal study at Rennes, followed by another in Paris, with which latter he combined regular attendance on medical and other lectures: his habits were methodical and persevering, and resulted in the acquisition of stores of knowledge, as solid as they were extensive.

The poetic genius, which was afterward to produce so much and such ripe fruit, was already quickened in the breast of the student. He tells us that he arrived in Paris in the year 1826, with all the self-importance, pride, and hopes, but with all the awkwardness and painful sensibility of the youth whose knowledge of the world has been limited to a reverent contemplation of his professor in his chair and his mother knitting stockings, but who has obtained the gold medal, and the prize for the best oration, at the college of his native province: his bachelor's diploma was in his trunk, a tragedy in his pocket, and his heart glowing in full faith that the life of the man of letters was the noblest and fairest under the sun. But his bright dreams were speedily disturbed. France was then full of enthusiasm for the liberation of Greece; yet the three copies of Souvestre's *Siege of Missolonghi*, duly forwarded to as many theatres, remained wholly unnoticed, till he ventured on asking, and readily obtained, the help of M. Alexandre Duval, a fellow-Breton, and whose own success on the stage had given him a powerful voice at the Théâtre Français. The tragedy was now read, and accepted with acclamation. But the Government censors next intervened; and when they had cut it down to the degree that respect for

the Sublime Porte and for absolute government in general demanded, the managers of the theatre relaxed, or changed their favourable disposition; and the author, worn out with the proceedings, withdrew the piece in a disgust which for a time extended itself to all his literary aspirations—nay, to life itself, though, happily for him (he observes), suicide was not at that time a fashion, and he did not know that it was one way of finding a publisher. Ten years afterwards, he could narrate these youthful experiences with a smile; but they were not the less real and painful at the time. But a severe discipline of another kind was at hand, to transform the dreaming youth into the earnest man. His elder brother, the captain of a merchantman in which their whole property was ventured, was lost at sea; the family was ruined; and Emile was the sole remaining support of his mother and his brother's widow. He left Paris immediately for home, and there sought for some employment, no matter what, which would yield the means of subsistence for them. He was offered and accepted the place of shopman to M. Mellinet, a Nantes bookseller; and behind his counter he took his stand, without hesitation or delay.

The courage of the young Souvestre did not fail under the humble tasks to which he had thus engaged himself; and he employed his leisure hours in writing verse or prose for the Nantes and Rennes periodicals, and occasionally was able to make an excursion into some part of his favourite Brittany, of which he now began to collect the traditions and other records. Meanwhile, the worthy bookseller, like all who came in contact with his shopman, saw more and more of

that intellectual and moral superiority, which showed itself, whether its possessor would or no, in the commonest conversation ; and he became the object of especial interest to one of the frequenters of M. Mellinet's shop, who was a philanthropist and a man of wealth.

This was M. Luminais, a deputy, and one of the most zealous of a number of persons who, at that period, were interesting themselves in the reform of the existing methods of their national education, which they aspired to make more deeply and practically moral, and thus to strengthen in the rising generation the disposition to prize and honour the name and institutions of their country, and the will and power to use their liberties aright. M. Luminais resolved to found a school at Nantes on a new plan, and he intrusted the charge of it to Emile Souvestre, associating with him another youthful philanthropist, M. Papot ; and their success was such that Souvestre was soon able to marry without imprudence. This union, promising in itself, and from the character of the man by whom the sanctity, the repose, and the sympathies of domestic life were prized in no ordinary degree, was terminated in less than a year by the death of his wife and unborn infant ; but they who knew him best say that this heavy trial did but prove the impossibility of his continuing to live without a renewal of the support he was thus deprived of. And this he subsequently found in the sister of his friend and associate, who, with her three daughters, lives to mourn their irreparable loss.

Experience showed that the new scheme of education was likely to be carried on more efficiently under a single head,

and Emile Souvestre, resigning his share of the work to M. Papot, withdrew with his wife to Morlaix, to be near his mother; but on her death, shortly after, he went to Brest, where he was first the editor of a newspaper, *Le Finistère*, and then Professor of Rhetoric in a college newly founded in that place, as well as a writer in the Paris *Temps*. During this period he finished the work which, on its publication in 1836, under the title of *Les Derniers Bretons*, at once established his reputation in France. It is a description of the country, manners, customs, and literature of Brittany, in which intimate personal acquaintance with, and hearty love of the subject are united with that peculiar power of painting nature and man which characterizes the simplest of Souvestre's writings; and the book is full of charm and interest even to the foreigner, who can easily believe that the French consider it of quite classical worth in their literature.

The tenor of Souvestre's life, in which he was now enjoying something of intercourse with the literary world of Paris amid the tranquillity of a home in his native province, was now interrupted by the failure of his health. It was supposed that he would benefit by exchanging the damp coast for a mountain climate, and his friends obtained for him the Chair of Rhetoric at Muhlhausen. But the breezes of the Vosges proved no more invigorating than those of the Atlantic; and he then resolved not to waste his life in wandering in search of health from place to place, and from profession to profession, with his young family, but to settle at once in Paris, and there devote himself entirely to literature. There he took up his abode in the autumn of 1836, on a fourth story (each story

being a distinct dwelling) in the suburb named *Poissonnière*, from the windows of which he looked out—like the elder Remi of his own tale—over the gardens below, and in which he worked for the remaining eighteen years of his noble and useful life. How steadily and laboriously he worked, the very list of his books, extending to near seventy volumes, may testify: and the manly independence and self-respect of this his literary life, may be illustrated by the little fact that nothing could induce him to share the payment for the English translation of those of his works over which he found he had retained no legal power, while he thus justified, with no less dignity than grace, his reference to the subject at all:—"Je vous demande pardon, Madame, d'entrer dans ces détails. Il y a malheureusement deux hommes dans l'écrivain qui vit de son travail, *l'auteur* et *l'homme d'affaires*: celui-ci est forcément moins poétique que l'autre; il est obligé de veiller aux intérêts positifs d'une manière souvent pénible, mais, en revanche, c'est lui qui garantit l'indépendance et la dignité de *l'auteur*. Depuis que l'homme de lettres se nourrit des produits de sa plume, il ne reçoit plus le pain des sinécures, de la cour, ou des grands seigneurs; son œuvre le fait vivre; c'est un compensation aux détails *prosaïques* dans lesquels il doit quelquefois descendre."\*

\* "I ask pardon, Madam, for entering into these details. There are unfortunately two persons in the writer who lives by his work—the *author*, and the *man of business*; and the latter is of necessity less poetical than the other, being obliged to look to material interests in a manner which is often painful, but which, on the other hand, secures the independence of the *author*. Since the man of letters has taken to maintaining himself by his pen, he feeds no longer on the doles of the court or of great lords; he lives by his own work, and thus finds compensation for being at times compelled to enter into prosaic details of business."

Many of our author's works—among which may be mentioned *Le Philosophe sous les Toits*, which received the crown of the Académie Française, and *Le Mémorial de Famille*, giving his ideal of married, as the other of unmarried life, and with which *La Dernière Etape*, of widowhood and old age, was completing the series when he was called on his own last journey—first appeared in the pages of the *Magasin Pittoresque*, a monthly illustrated periodical, with the management of which he had been connected from its commencement in 1830, and the didactic character of which was in harmony with that great purpose of the moral and intellectual culture of his countrymen to which his life was devoted.\*

A new opening, and in a form which the bent of his genius always led him to prefer to that of mere writing, was afforded him in 1848. M. Carnot, who has been misrepresented and calumniated by party ignorance and spite, both here and in France, for a passage in his Election Circular which, even without his subsequent explanation, could have been more honestly interpreted in a good sense, became Minister of Public Instruction and Worship; and he proceeded to organize a scheme of education for all classes of citizens, which, if we may believe the eloquent historian of the Revolution, was worthy of the man whom he depicts as cast in the mould of a patriot of antiquity, and pre-eminent among his fellows for religious philosophy, philanthropy, devotion to truth, firmness, feeling, and moderation. “He grouped around him, as it were in a philosophic and literary council, the men whose

\* The memoir which appeared in the *Magasin Pittoresque* for December last has, by the desire of M. Souvestre's family, been chiefly—though not exclusively—followed in the present notice.

names were highest and purest in philosophy and political literature ;" and among these was Emile Souvestre, who was appointed a lecturer in the school now established for the education of those intended for the civil service, and for which office his legal training gave him a special qualification in addition to those which he possessed as a man of genius, patriotism, and personal worth. His unpaid services were about the same time engaged, with those of University professors and other eminent men of letters, by the same Minister, for the evening lectures which he established for working men and their families in various parts of Paris. The room in which Souvestre gave his readings was crowded with an attentive and interested audience, and at the close of the evening the fathers of families gathered round the teacher to ask his advice in the choice of books for their children at home.

The success of these readings suggested to Souvestre the design, which he carried into effect in the summer of 1853, and was preparing to repeat in that of '54, of giving a course of public lectures in the principal towns of Switzerland —Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey, and Chaux-le-Fond. He was already known in that country by his books, several of which had been adopted by the public schools ; and we need not say that to know his writings was to esteem and love the writer. People hastened from all parts to see and hear the man himself ; and it was often necessary for him to repeat the same lecture to two successive audiences, because one room could not hold them all together. His friends say that this was certainly the happiest period of his life ; and we venture to

think that even the satisfaction given him by this enthusiastic reception from the whole educated people of French Switzerland, may have been heightened by the pleasure with which he learnt about the same time that he was becoming better known in England, both by the translations\* of the *Confessions d'un Ouvrier* and *Le Philosophe sous les Toits*, and by the increased circulation of his original works, which these promoted. He thus wrote in acknowledging the receipt of these translations—"Et maintenant, Madame, permettez-moi d'ajouter de vifs et sincères remerciements pour l'honneur que vous avez fait à *l'auteur* (referring to a passage quoted above), en choisissant son livre pour être traduit dans votre langue : c'est une distinction dont il se tient fort touché. Vouloir traduire une livre, c'est prouver qu'on entre en sympathie avec celui qui l'a écrit, et qu'on sent, qu'on pense, comme lui ! Il n'est rien de plus doux que ces adhésions obtenues de loin, et il y a un charme particulier dans les *amis inconnus* qui répondent à votre cœur sans que vous ayez jamais entendu leur voix."† And again—"Je dois donc vous remercier doublement, et de m'avoir fait connaitre au public anglais, et de m'avoir présenté sous un aspect si favorable."‡

Yet after his return to Paris, he seemed sadder than before

\* Published in Longman's "Traveller's Library."

† "And now, Madam, allow me to add my most sincere thanks for the honour you have done *the author* (referring to a passage quoted above) in choosing his book for translation into your own language : it is a distinction which he feels very sensibly. To resolve to translate a book is to give proof of hearty sympathy with the writer of it, and of feeling and thinking like himself. Nothing is more gratifying than to receive such assurances of sympathy from a distance ; and there is a peculiar charm in the *unknoen friends* whose hearts answer to your own, though you have never heard their voice."

‡ "I must thank you doubly, then :—for having introduced me to the English public, and for having presented me in so favourable an aspect"

his visit to Switzerland. He had seen only the favourable side of that country ; and the appearances of moral and religious earnestness, of general education, of reverence for the laws, of personal self-respect, and freedom from the spirit of ever-scheming selfishness, contrasted painfully with what he knew more intimately of the condition of his own people, and stirred deeply that patriotic grief for their faults which the reader of his books knows so well, and which, in *Le Mât de Cocagne* in particular, takes the form of a despair of all politicians and political schemes of reform, which seems strange, not to say wrong, to almost every Englishman. Not, however, that Souvestre ever really despaired of society. At the conclusion of his latest work, he declares that now, indeed, as often in past times, the faith of mankind is reeling and tottering under the terrible weight of the evils around them—while now, as then, they desire that the cup may pass from them ; but that to do our duty thoroughly, and with all our powers, in the work of bettering the world, morally and materially, will not be in vain, if only our trust is in Him whose promises, like His eternal purposes, can never fail, though they may be accomplished only through death.

The thought of death—of death as the way to resurrection and life—seems now to have occupied the thoughts of Souvestre in a degree which his friends have since looked back upon as an anticipation—unexpected at the time—of his impending separation from them. This sad and sudden event, preceded by a short illness, of which the serious character was unexpected an hour before its close, occurred on the 5th of July 1854, in his forty-eighth year : a life long if we measure

it by all he had done, and still more had been ; but short indeed if we remember what he still hoped to do, and think of the loss of those whom he has left behind.

The portraits of Emile Souvestre show him with a high intellectual forehead, an eye of fire, the Roman nose which marks the clear and analytic mind, and a mouth combining firmness and dignity with that sweetness of expression which was so marked in his living countenance, that little children when they saw him, would stretch out their hands to him. His daily life—in his own home, and among his friends—was not less, but more than his written words. It might be truly said of him that—

“First he wrought, and afterwards he taught.”

DUTY was the principle of his life, as it is of his books : the spirit in which the youth had renounced the charms of Paris society, and the prospects of an honourable profession, to stand behind a shop-counter in Nantes, because his duty bade him, was the spirit which to the last shed its bright light on the home of his wife and children, and made every look and word an assurance to them not less of support and strength, than of an inexhaustible devotion and tenderness ;—for it was the spirit of duty as well as affection, though its sterner voice was heard only by himself. This is their own testimony, and not that of a less competent informant.

In conversation, the powers of Souvestre are said to have been even more remarkable than in writing—though it is difficult for those who only know him through his books and letters to feel that this could be. But in the one as in the other case, the moral tone was ever predominant, so that it

has been said of him that if he had been born a French Protestant, he would have no doubt become a pastor, so wholly was his heart set upon the moral and religious instruction of his countrymen. His genius was conservative ; with a true faith in man's progress, and unaffected readiness to abandon the most time-honoured traditions when proved to be hostile to that progress, he seems to have looked rather to the better use of existing means than to the introduction of new ones for effecting the great end ; and those who think that both one and the other may be required, and that new, as well as, though not instead of, the old institutions and methods of social organization are demanded by the wants of our times, will perhaps see in this conservative disposition of Souvestre some explanation of that occasional despondency of his views of society which has been mentioned. But be this as it may, we repeat that DUTY was the principle of his life, which he never ceased to believe in and to teach. We English are apt to fancy that we care more for duty than other men, and especially than our honour-coveting neighbours ; but as our manufacturers discovered at the Great Exhibition that it was not in artistic beauty alone, but also in work for ordinary uses, that they were often inferior to the French ; and as our soldiers are now confessing that it is not only in the mar-shalling of great armies, but much more in the organization of hospitals and roads, that our "practical" nation has need to learn of them ; so it might not be unprofitable to ask ourselves whether we can point to any popular writer of our own who so makes duty his cardinal doctrine, and who has been listened to with such wide-spread interest and sympathy by

his countrymen, as Emile Souvestre. At the news of his death, Frenchmen of all opinions rendered homage to his character ; and those—for there were such—who, in his lifetime, had accused him of employing art too entirely in the service of morals, were not last to deplore the loss which the national literature had sustained in him. The Académie Française voted to Madame Souvestre, his widow, the testimonial founded by M. Lambert for the recognition of the memory of the writer who had been most useful to his country.

The two first tales, THE BARGE MAN OF THE LOIRE and THE LAZARETTO-KEEPER, were translated by M. Souvestre's own request—the former from the volume called *Sous les Filets*, and the latter from *En Quarantaine*: and the translators had hoped to offer them in their English form to the author as a token of personal regard and esteem. But alas ! they can only lay them as a winter wreath upon his tomb !

CLIFTON, February 1855.

# BRITTANY AND LA VENDÉE.

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## THE BARGEMAN OF THE LOIRE.

### CHAPTER I.—THE RIVALS.

Do you see that figure of a nymph leaning on the symbolic urn? Her fair hair is wreathed with silver willow; her soft blue eye wanders into the depths of heaven; her hands are full of fruits, and stretched towards a group of children; and her beautiful form lies gracefully reclining along the flowery grass. It is the Loire, such as art has been able to express her in marble—such as your own imagination, when you had once seen, would personify, her. Force, impetuosity, and grandeur, may rule elsewhere; here is the reign of beauty and fertility. In a course of more than a hundred and eighty leagues, the “corn-coloured river,” as an old chronicler has it, flows through meadows, vineyards, woods, and great cities, without once finding a barren or a desert spot. From its source to the sea, on either side, the eye sees only flocks feeding, chimneys smoking, and ploughmen who seem singing at their ploughs. The stream glides noiselessly over its sandy bed—among islets nodding their plumes of osier, willow,

and poplar. In all the landscape, there is a delightful though rather unvarying softness ; a subdued quiet, which gives to everything around you that attractiveness which is somehow always found with affluence and ease. It is almost a piece of Arcadia, with more water and less sun.

Upon the river dwell a race who partake its character. They have not the jeering turbulence of the Seine boatmen, nor the sullen fierceness of those of the Rhône, nor the heaviness of the men who navigate the Rhine. The bargeman of the Loire is of a peaceful disposition ; vigorous without coarseness, and merry without excess, he lets his life flow on through things as he finds them, like the water which carries him between its fertile banks. With a few exceptions, he has no restraints of locks, no hard labour at the oar, no tedious towing work to undergo. The wind, which finds free course through the immense basin of the river, enables him to sail both up and down. Standing at the enormous helm, the boatmaster attends only to the course of the barge, whilst his mates help it along by "spurring" the bottom of the water with iron-shod poles. At intervals, a few words are exchanged in the loud tone of people accustomed to talk in the open air ; the youngster hums the famous song of "The Bargeman of the Loire ;" the barge that meets them gets a merry cheer as it passes, or gives them some useful bit of news ; and in this way they all reach the evening's anchorage, where the crews who have had equal luck of wind and tide during the day, meet together at the public house patronized by *the River Service*.

One of these chances has just brought the bargemen of the "Hope," a newly-built *charreynone*, and those of the *futreau*\*

\* The Charreynones and the Futeaux, like the Pyards, the Chalans, and the Gabares, are boats in use upon the Loire. Differences of size and other things distinguish them one from the other. The Futeau is generally smaller than the Charreynone ; formerly it had a covered place for the use of passengers.

"White Flag," together at the "Grand Turk," at Chalonnes. It was the end of January in the year 1819 : the snow had now been lying on the ground for a long time, and a great fire was blazing in the main room of the inn, which served at once for kitchen and hall. The "river brethren," while waiting for supper, sat drinking round a large oak table stained with wine, and with four brass halfpence at its four corners, where some jovial fellow had nailed them by way of ornament. The bargemen's voices resounded merrily in boisterous jests and laughter, when the inn door, which the inclemency of the season had kept closed, contrary to all custom, was hastily opened. At the draught of cold air which entered with the new-comer, they all turned round, and discovered "outlawed Tony." This was the nickname given to Master Lézin, formerly a bargeman, and now a fisherman of the Loire ; and who had many times been fined and sent to jail for making use of the small-meshed nets, which are forbidden by law, lest the river should be unstocked by the destruction of the young fry. Lézin was one of those cynics of the baser sort, who, finding it troublesome to affect virtue, indulge themselves in plain-speaking vice. To be beforehand with the accusations of others, he had become his own accuser, and complacently showed himself on his evil reputation, elevated as on a pedestal ; and his buffoonery made his immorality pass. Many honest folks laughed at him—the timid from false shame, and the bold not to seem too easily startled ; and by thus making themselves his accomplices they encouraged Lézin in his course.

The bargemen greeted his entrance with a welcome of doubtful meaning, but he seemed to take it in good part.

"Good-day, my lads ; a good-day, and a merry new year to you," said he, with his usual impudent chuckle.

Addressing himself to a handsome young man of five-

and-twenty, who, notwithstanding the cold, wore the ordinary bargeman's dress—a short jacket, blue trowsers fastened round the waist with a red woollen sash, a knotted cotton cravat, small glazed hat, and thin shoes tied with ribbon—he added—"Ah, here you are, André, my boy; they say you are beginning the year by sporting a bran-new Charre-yonne."

Then turning round—

"My service to you, Master Méru; and to your nephew Francis, and all the rest. Confound me if all the folks here must not be honest men, to look so comfortable and happy as they do."

"You don't mean to reckon yourself among them, then, Master Outlaw," observed Méru, with a jocoseness that imperfectly concealed his contempt.

"Men of the world never reckon themselves when they get among innocents," replied Lézin, in a tone of easy impudence. "But deuce take me if I did not think Master Méru's Futreau was discharged and off again."

"Then you did not know that I was waiting here for a freight?"

"A freight!" repeated the fisherman; "have the lords of Chalonnnes charged you with the carriage of their distaff?"\*

"Not a distaff, but some one who knows how to use it."

Lézin followed the looks of the bargeman towards the chimney corner, and he there perceived a girl spinning by the fireside.

"Faith! 'tis pretty Entine!"† cried he; "how goes it with you, Entine?"

\* The Sire of Chalonnnes having neglected to take aid to the Seigneur of Chantocé when besieged by the English, was condemned to send his wife every year a distaff laid on a silken cushion, and drawn in a carriage by four oxen.

† Short for Valentine.

"Colder than in the month of August, Mr. Lézin," said the damsel, whose perked-up nose, laughing mouth, and saucy eys, showed her character.

"And is this the way you leave your uncle at St. Vinecent's Hermitage?" resumed the fisherman; "cannot the lovely Entine fancy a farmhouse?"

"No," replied she ironically; "the time hung heavy on my hands, as I might not guide the plough, nor drive the oxen, nor even manage the servant lads."

Lézin gave a knowing look, and then—

"My notion is rather that you wished yourself back in the town of Nantes," replied he impudently. "The town is the right place for pretty girls and sharpers."

"Then perhaps you have some idea of going there, Mr. Lézin?" asked Entine with an air of simplicity, which did not take the fisherman in.

"Mischievous mole!" said he; "he will be sharp enough who sells you."

"And happy enough, I hope, who buys me," added the damsel; "but a ring and a prayer-book will be wanted for that."

"Yes, yes," resumed Lézin, laughing; "I know you require a license for fishing."

"And she does not use illegal nets," put in Méru gaily.

"Because the fish comes of itself into her snare," replied the fisherman. "Honesty's the same with girls as with boys, old fellow—it's a matter of convenience; if I could get anything by turning saint, I would soon have myself on the list. But now, where are you taking her to at Nantes?"

"To a fine wooden house upon two wheels, which go round without going on," said Entine.

"That's Aunt Rinot's mill?"

"There now, if you don't understand witchcraft!"

"More than you think for, poor little trout! And to prove

it, I can tell you what makes you so happy to go and live at the Madeleine mill."

"Perhaps because flour does not make one's face black."

"My notion is rather because the miller is a handsome lad."

"The miller!" repeated the damsels. "Then you don't know that my aunt is a widow?"

"But widows have sons," rejoined the fisherman; "and I see one, not two steps off, who seems a likely one to be looking out for a sweetheart.—Come, let us know, Francis, is not that the truth?"

The youth to whom he spoke was what is called a well-grown young fellow, strongly built, and of a florid complexion; but his forehead was low, and he had a sullen look. He coloured at the fisherman's question.

"As you were speaking to my cousin, you had better get her to answer you," said he gruffly, and with embarrassment.

"He would like it," observed Méru, laughing; "but he is not eunning enough yet to catch her. You see, Mr. Outlaw, that it's of no use for the meshes of your nets to be smaller than lawful; a girl's secrets will slip through them, anyhow. Hey, Entine?"

"I beg your pardon, uncle, but I don't understand about fishing," replied she, with an arch look of ignorance, which made everybody laugh.

"If Francis is not your sweetheart, then you must have some one else," said Lézin. "Let us see, where can there be a more likely blade for a lover than your cousin?"

"Find out, master," replied the girl, keeping her eyes fixed upon her distaff, but yet involuntarily turning herself a little towards the right in a way which did not escape the sharp looks of outlawed Tony.

"Well, well; then perhaps it is the master of the new Charreyonne?" asked he in a whisper.

The damsel pretended not to hear, and looked down.

"He's the man," continued Lézin, with a burst of laughter. "Oh, that's famous! Now I know why he calls his boat 'The Hope.'"

"Come, we shall all have our turn," said the young boatman, who coloured a little, but kept his good-humoured look. "Positively, Tony is turned priest, and means to confess all the lads and lasses in the country round."

"Ah, you may laugh," resumed the fisherman; "but would you like me to tell the name of the flower that is growing at the bottom of your heart, and of pretty Entine's?"

"Nobody asked you, Master Outlaw," put in Francis abruptly.

"And of yours too, my lad," added the imperturbable fisherman; "don't you know, that by dint of looking to the bottom of the river one learns to see clearly into men's minds. There are always troubled waters in both. So, I can tell you that two of you are setting your lines in the same pool—one openly, and the other like a sneak; and the other is not André. Now, do you understand?"

"I understand," cried Francis, casting a scowl full of rancour at Lézin. "I understand that you are a good-for-nothing rascal, who either to-day or to-morrow must be made to hold his tongue."

"Pooh! how will you do that, my lad?" asked outlawed Tony, looking the youth full in the face.

"By shutting your mouth with a glass of wine," interrupted André in a jovial voice, and holding out to the fisherman a cup filled to the brim.

Lézin nodded his head.

"Directly," said he. "It is you who are a true bargeman

—as bright as the sun, and as free as the river. May the mullets fry me if I don't give you my daughter—when I have one!"

"And when he has proved himself a good boatmaster," added Méru, who was emptying his glass by little sips; "for now-a-days the lads take the command before they have learned to obey, and the youngsters give captains the go-by in a trice! But it is not enough to have a barge under your feet; you must know how to make her follow the channel, avoid the ice, clear the bridges, anchor at the best places, and manage her crew by kindness."

"Stop!" cried the fisherman, shrugging his shoulders, "all that goes for nothing; what you are speaking of only comes second."

"Then what comes first?" asked Entine's uncle.

"What really makes the bargeman."

"Well, what's that?"

"It's the *matelote*,<sup>\*</sup> Father Méru. He who can make that best will always be the river's best friend, have the steadiest hand, and the quickest brains too."

All the boatmen began to laugh.

"Faith! outlawed Tony is right," said the oldest; "I have always seen good matelote-makers good sailors."

"Then it's agreed," cried Lézin, slipping a net-bag from off his shoulder; "we must take soundings what each one is worth. Come, in the devil's name! I propose a matelote-match between the lads; here's the fish, Goodman Méru will find the sauce."

"Agreed," said the boatman.

"Quick! Francis, André, Simon," resumed the fisherman; "tuck up your sleeves, youngsters, and matelote to death! When each has done his best, the elders will be judges."

\* A dish composed of several kinds of fish.

He emptied the bag of fish into several plates, which the young bargemen came and took with a laugh.

This sort of contest was neither strange nor new to them. They were, oftener than not, obliged to depend upon themselves for everything during their wandering and isolated lives on the river, and to make the most of the smallest means; and usually, moreover, to procure these from the river which was carrying them along. Thus the art of dressing fish had become one of the most important occupations of a boatman of the Loire. He found his pride and pleasure both in it. Consequently, the "bargeman's mate-lote" has acquired and retained a fame which, like the trophies of Miltiades, still prevents more than one culinary Themistocles from sleeping. In the towns on the banks of the river, many clever servants of Lent have vainly applied their minds to the discovery of the secret of this celebrated dish: whether it is some defect in the imitation, or prejudice in the tasters, the supremacy has hitherto remained indisputably with the inventors.

Whilst André and his rivals were preparing for the match proposed by Lézin, the latter had seated himself at the table with the drinkers, and continued to enliven them with his impudent jokes. But Anjou wine always took Méru back to old thoughts of past times: no sooner did he begin to get heated, than he set to talking of the war in which he had formerly taken part in La Vendée, and his encounters with the "Blues;" and ended by proposing a health to the White Flag.

"A health! only one!" cried the fisherman; "no, no, old boy, that's very unhealthy; two healths, by all means, or three, if you please. I'm for all colours which give a man wine to drink without his having to pay for it."

"Then you have no opinion of your own, you sinner?" said the bargeman contemptuously.

"Why should I?" asked Lézin. "If I had one, nobody would buy it of me, and, in the long run, I might find it troublesome to keep. Opinions are all very well for the town gentry who like to have their luxuries."

"Still, you are as old as I am," observed Méru, "and your beard must have grown at the time of the great war."

"Therefore they trimmed it for me every Sunday," replied Lézin waggishly.

"That means that you had not heart enough to fight for your God and your king," replied the bargeman with warmth.

"Faith! it was not for want of heart, Father Méru," said the fisherman; "it was the fault of our mothers, who taught us lads of Behuard how to reason."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, this is how it was—perhaps there are some here who know I was born in the Isle of Behuard, which lies up above. As the Loire is pretty wide there, and the water too deep to cross in your gaiters, the death-shivers were on both the banks without troubling our digestion. Neither the Whites nor the Blues had boats to pay us a visit in, and we took care to keep our barges off the banks. So everything went on with its accustomed regularity—people went to their mass and went to their dinner, they made hay and they made love—truly it was a blessed time! But one day, or rather I should say one evening, lo and behold! there comes a little wherry alongside with three Blues, who wanted provisions. They were told that no one had more than enough for himself; they answered they must have what they wanted, and threatened to cure the hunger of the first who refused them; and they entered our next neighbour's house, where they set to work—eating, drinking, and kissing the girls to their hearts' content."

"And you let them do it, you cowards!" interrupted Méru.

"Wait till I've finished," continued Lézin. "Whilst they were taking their pleasure in this way, our men assembled and consulted together. The oldest said, 'If we let these three hungry fellows go back again, they will tell where the cloth is laid; to-morrow we shall have thirty here, and the next day three hundred! So we must shut them up in some place where they can never get out again, and the best cage is a hole in the churchyard.' Everybody agreed that this was the right thing. The business was settled the same evening; and the next morning the priest was asked for a mass for the repose of their souls."

"Well done! you were quite right," said the old bargeman, getting more and more heated. "I see that you too have been at cuffs with the Blues."

"Stay a moment, Father Méru," resumed the fisherman; "it was a general measure of precaution. A week after, when the Whites came and wanted to ring the tocsin—to carry off the corn, and take the fowling-pieces, our people were obliged to make use of the same arguments, and had to say another mass."

"For the Whites!" cried Méru, whose conscience, like that of all party-men, had two sides. "Oh, you scoundrels! you murdered true Christians who came to ask you for help! And dare you tell me, and not fear that I shall revenge them upon you?"

The old bargeman's eyes rolled in their sockets, his voice shook with rage, and he seized a bottle that was standing before him by the neck, as if he meant to make a weapon of it. Lézin quietly held out his glass.

"Why revenge them upon me, who was not then in the place?" said he, smiling. "Faith! I only heard of it many years after, when both Blues and Whites had knocked out

their musket-flints. Come, old boy, pour away! talking so much chokes me."

Méru's fingers relaxed their grasp of the bottle, and he mechanically filled the fisherman's glass.

Entine, who was frightened at her uncle's burst of rage, had come to the table; and she prevented the renewal of the conversation by laying the cloth, and saying the *matelotes* were ready.

In fact, it was not long before the three young bargemen made their appearance with their dishes, in which the Anjou wine they had set on fire was running along with unsteady flame. It went out when on the table, and the company at once proceeded to their investigation. Most of them set about it with no small solemnity, and made their trials and comparisons several times over. The competitors stood waiting behind them, whilst the damsel looked from one of the company to another with something of anxiety. Lézin was the first to declare his opinion.

"There's a dish," said he, pointing to the one furthest off, "that I would not give to a dog, nor even a river-keeper; this one"—looking at that nearest—"a man might eat as he drinks Loire water, for want of something better; but for this in the middle I would sell my soul to Beelzebub, if the rogue were still in business and had not cleared off his stock."

"A just judgment!" cried every voice.

"It is André's *matelote*," said Entine quickly, and colouring with delight.

"And the one yonder is the miller's," added Lézin, with a sly look at Francis. "I don't wonder now that he put so much flour in it."

The youth did not answer, but his eyes assumed a still more treacherous and sullen look. In the meantime the boatmen lifted their glasses.

"The health of the king of the matelote-makers!" cried Lézin.

"Come here, my young bargeman," added Méru, making a place for him near himself.

André hastened to take it, and pledged all the company, whose joviality was getting more and more noisy. Méru himself had completely forgotten his anger, and manifested a good-will to the young bargemaster, for which the latter was evidently grateful. At last he put his hand in a friendly way upon his shoulder, exclaiming—

"Well, there's no going against what that rascal of an outlaw says, 'A good matelote shows a good bargeman,' and yours is the best sample. The Virgin has had a finger in it, as the saying is. Now it remains to be proved if you are of the stuff all true bargemasters are made of. We shall know that to-morrow, my boy, as my *Futreau* is to go down to Nantes with your *Charreyonne*. I shall be empty, and you laden; if you do not drop very far astern, I shall say that in spite of your youth you have a right to wear anchor ear-rings, and, better still, to say grace, and help yourself first."\*

"You may be sure I shall do my best, Father Méru," said André, giving a side-look at Entine. "As true as I'm my mother's son, I have nothing nearer my heart than to give you satisfaction."

The old bargeman, who had caught his look, gave a merry grin.

"Ay, ay, my lad," replied he, filling his glass again; "uncles, you see, are something like helms—they want constant management."

And seeing André going to take advantage of the opening, and perhaps to come to an explanation—

\* The barge crew all eat their meals together; but the master says grace, and helps himself first,—the dishes being handed in France, not the plates, as in England.

"I shall tell you nothing more," added he, "unless it be that my good-will is like the river—open to all the world. It is the best sailor who will go ahead. Hurrah for the youngsters! Hoist the sail and shove away; the master of the White Flag is the friend of all brave lads."

"And all brave lads like to have him for their master!" cried André, clinking his glass against Méru's. "Confound me if this is not the pleasantest evening of my life! Thunder and lightning could not take away the happiness I feel!"

"Then you will not lose it by the neighbour I see coming," observed Lézin, who had walked to the window.

"Whom do you see?" asked André, whose fascinated eyes were still fixed on Entine.

"Look!" replied the fisherman.

A tall man, thin, and slovenly in his dress, had just opened the door. He stood unsteadily on the threshold, and, with eyes dulled by drunkenness, he seemed searching for some one in the parlour of the "Grand Turk." At sight of him, the young boatmaster looked surprised.

"It is my father," cried he.

"Master Jacques!" repeated several voices; "well, why does he not come in?"

"Then you don't see that he is head to wind, as usual," said Francis with a malicious laugh. "Come, old Jacques, come along; the bird's here."

The drunkard reeled on a step towards André, who got up, looking rather ashamed as his looks encountered those of Méru.

"You'll excuse him, Captain," said he in a whisper, and colouring; "my father has had many crosses formerly, and he finds too much comfort in the brandy bottle."

"So I have been told," replied the bargeman with a sort of pity; "but this is the first time I have met with him.

Poor old man, he is severely punished ! His hands shake like a birch leaf ! Look there, lads, and learn that wine is the true drink for man : at most, it puts him down for an hour, whilst brandy makes an end of him without mercy."

Then turning to André's father, and pointing to a stool against the wall, he added—

"Come, Master Jacques, one more pull at the oar. And all of you, lads, make room for him ; respect sorrow."

The old man succeeded in reaching the stool and seating himself, with the help of André, who then endeavoured to learn what had induced him to leave Saint-George, where he lived.

After repeatedly bringing him back to the point, he thought he made out that his father had received a letter which called them both to Nantes on important business, and that he had come to join him at Chalonnes, that he might go down the Loire in his boat. What the nature of the business was, Master Jacques refused to explain. When drunk, he was accustomed to hold a certain mastery over himself which had always struck his son with wonder. It seemed as if a firm and sovereign will, as inseparable from his being as the instinct of self-preservation, always kept watch over the portals of his soul. Often the word just escaping from his lips was suddenly withheld by a caution which had outlived everything else, and then he took refuge in obstinate silence. The young bargeman knew his habits too well to persist in useless attempts to change them. As soon as he saw him determined to hold his tongue, he left off questioning him, and only thought of getting back to his barge. His two men set off first, taking Master Jacques with them, whilst he took leave of Entine and her uncle.

"I must set off to-morrow morning before daylight," said he to them. "There's ice up the river ; the first mild weather

may move it, and then beware of the break-up. I am in a hurry to be at Nantes with my cargo."

"And I, too, with my boat and my niece," replied Méru merrily; "for it is agreed, my lad, that we sail in company, is it not?"

"I hope so, Captain, since that is the way to get your good-will. Do you remember what you said?"

"And I'll not break my word," replied Méru; "yes, yes, now we shall see what you are made of. Look you to your boat, Francis shall steer mine; and when we come to Nantes we shall know what you are both worth."

André pressed the old bargeman's hand, and then took leave of Entine by kissing her, according to custom, on both cheeks, and bidding her a hearty good-bye.

"If you really meant to follow us," said the damsel slyly, "you would only have said, Good-bye till our next meeting."

"Goodbye till our next meeting, then," replied André; "and pray to the Virgin for me."

He went back to his barge, whilst Méru remained at the inn, where he intended to stay the night with his niece, sending his crew by themselves to their boat with Francis.

This last felt rage and jealousy burning within him. The little defeat he had just sustained, the jokes of Lézin, and above all, his cousin's very evident preference of André, were rankling like poison in his heart. He was in that state of mind, that he could not himself have decided if his hatred of him was stronger than his love for her; but hatred and love ended in a single determination—that of ridding himself of the young boatmaster at any cost. He was too prudent to attack him openly, and looked about for some way of damaging him without committing himself. He was lying down near his mates in the cabin of the boat; but whilst the two

bargemen were snoring by his side, he was still tossing wakefully on his pallet.

The contest which was to begin next morning between himself and André, added still more to his restlessness and irritation. He had passed his early youth at Nantes, in the lazy life of a mill, without any other occupation than dressing the millstone, raising the water-gates, and playing the bag-pipe, as was the custom of the millers of the place. Afterwards, owing to a quarrel with his mother, he had been compelled to go back to his uncle, and had turned barge man, but without ever having been able to acquire much experience or skill in his new craft. He therefore foresaw that the trial which Father Méru had proposed between him and André would end in a new disgrace to him, and to all appearance make sure of Entine's marriage with the young boatmaster. All at once he started up as if struck by a sudden light, thought an instant, and then slipped out of the cabin, and went cautiously to the stern of the boat, and looked round.

All was still in the other barge, which was moored a little lower down. The night was dark, and the waters of the Loire were rolling by with a low murmur. Having satisfied himself that no one could see him, Francis got into the wherry, which he unfastened, and cut across the stream in a slanting direction till he reached the channel. He then dropped down the river for some distance, without giving the slightest indication of his intention; nor was it until the current had brought him between the two great isles, the Desert and the Ospray, that he slackened the boat's speed.

Deposits of soil, which were promoted by the existence of the two islands, obstructed the bed of the river, which made numerous windings in this place; and the constant shifting of the sandbanks caused this passage to be rightly looked upon as one of the most difficult between Angers and Nantes.

The Office of Buoys and Signals had consequently directed their particular attention to it. By their orders, large willow boughs were stuck into the sand, and shifted at each change of deep channel, so as to point out the shoals to the barges, and mark the proper course for them to take. Francis went from one to the other, cleverly pulling them out and putting them back again, so as to mark out the channel over the sandbanks. He reckoned that the next morning André would set off the first, and that his deep-laden barge, being guided by these false marks, could not fail to run aground. By this means, he not only made sure of an easy victory over his rival, but exposed him to the risk of losing his vessel, which might probably go to pieces on the sandbanks; and he would then be thrown back among the hired bargemen, on none of whom, he felt assured, would Méru ever bestow his niece's hand. At the same time that he was preparing this infamous snare, he examined the way for himself through the channel, in order to pass it without danger; and his work being completed, he got back to his own barge again without loss of time.

To reach it, he had to pass close by the "Hope," which was moored below Méru's boat; but at the moment he came alongside, a head rose up from the bows. Francis stopped in fear, and kept his wherry in the shadow. The head he had seen remained leaning over the waters for some purpose he could not make out. At first he thought it might be André preparing to get under weigh, but he soon saw the night-watcher raise himself up again, and he recognised Master Jacques by his height.

In spite of the cold, the latter had taken off his jacket, and held a boat-hook in his hand. Francis saw him pass along the gunwale, and go softly back into the cabin. He hastened to double the barge and get aboard his uncle's boat, where he

found the men still asleep. Certain, then, that his absence had not been remarked, he crept back to his bed, where, in a more tranquil state than before, he waited for the morning.

The first dawn of day was just clearing away the river mists, when his companions awoke him. All was already stirring in André's boat, which, laden to the water-line, began moving heavily. The young boatmaster was giving his orders, and bearing a hand everywhere, with that calm energy which is the great virtue of the bargeman of the Loire. The getting under sail was effected slowly, but without a single false move, and the boat dropped into the current with a kind of careless confidence.

"Well handled, my lad!" shouted a voice from the bank.

André turned round, and through the morning mist recognised Uncle Mérus with his niece, who had smart clogs on, and was wrapped in a cloak of brown cloth edged with black velvet. He greeted them by lifting his little glazed hat.

"The 'Hope' asks your pardon for going ahead," said he merrily; "but she has too many nails in her shoes to move very fast."

"Go along, my boy," replied the old bargeman, waving his hand; "the 'White Flag' will not be long before she comes up with you."

And he walked towards his own barge, telling his niece to make haste on board; but she was determined the young boatmaster should keep his advantage. Just as she was about to enter the boat, she stopped short, as if recollecting something.

"Oh, holy Virgin!" cried she, "I'll wager, uncle, you have forgotten to speak to the clergyman about the picture you were to bring him from Nantes."

"I have the letter he wrote to the artist in my pocket-book," replied Mérus; "quick, come on board, my girl."

"And have you the order for preserves for the mayor?" continued Entine without stirring.

"He does not want them," replied the boatmaster; "come off, I tell you."

"Still, you have not wished your gossip Bavot good-bye." The old boatmaster stamped his foot.

"The deuce take all Bavots and babbler!" cried he; "do you wish to keep us here till the ice comes down? Come on board, look you, or I trip the anchor."

"I am coming, I am coming," said the girl, who did not appear the least frightened at Méru's threat. "It was for you I was speaking, uncle; it is all over if you no longer care for the Bavots and their mild white wine."

The bargeman, in whom this last suggestion awoke an involuntary regret, replied by a sailor's oath that was enough to make all the saints in paradise shudder.

"Will you hold your plaguy tongue?" cried he. "I tell you, if we delay any longer we shall not reach La Meilleraie this evening. Look at the 'Hope'—see, she is already in the gullet."

The damsel turned her eyes in the direction he pointed, and saw that André's boat was in fact just reaching the channel between the two isles. She thought she had given him a sufficient start, and, after a few fresh and indispensable delays to look for her travelling basket, to fasten her cloak over again, and to take leave of the hostess of the "Grand Turk," who had just made her appearance, she made up her mind to cross the plank which connected the barge with the shore.

The bargemen then unfastened the cables; the boat, which was in ballast, obeyed their first long push; it went about rapidly, and was soon in the middle of the stream, like the other vessel, which could be seen through the mist.

The two barges had hoisted their sails, and were dropping

down the stream, but in very unequal circumstances ; the one, being heavily laden, crept along with difficulty, and was delayed by the slowness of her movements every time she had to round one of the thousand sandbanks through which the channel wound its course ; the other, completely empty, glided lightly over the water, and instantly obeyed every impulse of the enormous blade which formed her rudder. Consequently the distance between the two boats kept decreasing every moment. Already they were so near André's barge that they could distinguish the men who were helping it along by shovelling with their iron-shod poles, and the young master who was watching at the helm, and striving to shorten the turns as much as he could. Méru showed him to his nephew, who was steering the "White Flag," as he had promised.

"Look how close that fine lad there steers," said he, in a kind of admiration ; "a fish is not more master of his tail than he is of his rudder. Come, Fanfan, take care not to do worse than he, for your honour as a bargeman is at stake. You have *quinte* and *quatorze* ; don't lose the game for want of point."

The young boatman only answered by a nod. They were just running in between the isles of Desert and Ospray ; it was there that the match would have to be decided. He held his eyes fixed upon the "Hope," which was still keeping on ahead, at a distance which was maintained by the courage of her crew, and her captain's skill, but which was not so great but that they could hear their voices, and even distinguish the expression of their faces from the "White Flag."

They were just nearing the first point when Master Jacques appeared by his son's side. He had lost some of that ghastly look which drunkenness had given him the evening before, and his eye showed some intelligence. He looked for a minute at the boat as it dropt slowly down the stream, and

then at the swelling waters as they rolled upon the shores, and the willows sparkling with hoar-frost. A faint colour rose to his cheeks, and he snuffed the breeze as if he would drink in the air of the Loire.

"I remember the place," murmured he; "it is now thirty years ago since I passed it. I was steering a large boat; I was only twenty-five; but then the water was more transparent, and the birds were singing among the trees."

"Then has Master Jacques been a boatmaster on the Loire?" asked one of the men.

"Yes," replied the old man with thoughtful sadness, "those were good times—neither ice nor sand could stop me; my boat obeyed me as the ass obeys the miller's wife."

The bargeman shrugged his shoulders sneeringly.

"Well, here's a difference," said he; "at present, it's my notion, Master Jacques, that it would suit you better to guide an ass than a boat."

Jacques looked up, and fire kindled in his eyes.

"Who told you that?" cried he. "Oh, perhaps you think I have forgotten the craft. By my soul, we'll see that presently. Take my jacket; and you, André, help them to shove—I will steer."

He took off his coat, and put his hand upon the tiller; but his son did not seem disposed to yield it to him.

"Let be, let be, father," said he, with his eyes fixed upon the stream; "it is an awkward place here, and needs a sharp sight."

"Well, we shall keep our eyes open," replied Jacques impatiently.

"Wait," resumed the youth; "you shall take the helm when we have doubled the isles."

"And when the boat can go all alone," put in the bargeman who had questioned the old man's skill.

The latter drew himself up, and the blood rushed to his face.

"Did you hear me?" repeated he to André.

"Wait one moment," said the young man.

"Make way for your father!" cried Master Jacques, pushing him violently aside. Then taking possession of the helm, he suddenly gave the barge another course.

André tried to stop him, but the old man was as if he heard nothing. His whole being seemed to have undergone a change. With his body erect, his head thrown back, one foot planted firmly against the gunwale, and both his hands resting upon the helm, he had assumed such a look of confidence and command, that the youth stood amazed. His eyes, which were usually dulled by the fumes of drunkenness, had now an acute and concentrated expression; and as he fixed them upon the stream, they seemed to pierce its veil, and to read it to the bottom. After having studied the eddies for a few minutes, he altered the course still more decidedly. The boatmen sang out loudly.

"We are leaving the channel!" cried they all. "Look, the barge is sailing right across the safety-marks!"

"Down helm, father, or we shall be aground!" added André; "a starboard, a starboard!"

"Keep away a starboard," said Jacques in a loud voice, without paying any attention to his son's warning.

In fact, on that side the boat was just touching a shoal. The bargemen looked at one another in surprise.

"Heaven help us! The safety-marks are not true, then?" cried the boatmaster, leaning over the water to see better.

"The beacons stand, and the shoals move," said Jacques. "In my time, they did not write down the bargeman's course with willow boughs; we knew how to read it upon the water. A larboard, now? keep away a larboard. Don't you see

the whirling waters and the foam, which mark a sandbank? Those marks are not set by man's hands, and they never lead wrong."

This time, the boatmen obeyed; and with their poles they kept the boat well off the shoal he pointed out. The old man went on steering in this way, and twenty times passed across the line of the beacons, without any other guide than the appearance of the currents. The crew were struck with surprise, looked at him in silence, and instantly obeyed his slightest orders. At last they reached the mouth of the passage at the end of the two islands, and were entering into the main stream of the Loire, when loud calls from the White Flag made them look round.

When Méru saw Master Jacques handle his barge so strangely, leaving the marked course and going into shoal-water, he mounted upon his seat, and for some time followed him with his eyes without being able to comprehend what he was about. The bargemen, too, leaning upon their iron-shod poles, asked one another what could be his reason for thus going straight into danger; but the most astonished and the most alarmed of all was Francis, who thought his trick had been found out. Besides the severe penalties with which the navigation laws would punish it, he knew what disgrace it would cover him with in the eyes of the whole "Loire service;" and what, above all, would be his uncle Méru's indignation if he ever knew of it? These considerations, which he had not dwelt upon as long as he thought his secret safe, came upon him all at once now that he feared it was discovered. Pale and trembling, he left the rudder to one of the men, and hurried to the bows of the barge, the better to watch the bold course of his rival's vessel, and not knowing if he ought to wish her success or failure. Meantime, the man at the helm continued to steer his own barge into the

channel marked out by the false beacons. All at once a sudden shock lifted the bows ; they heard the grating of the pebbles as they struck against the keel, and the water streamed in between the started planks. The barge was aground !

Though the crew were in no serious danger, their situation was perplexing. The stream being more than usually shut in just here, ran very strongly, and was driving them more and more upon the sandbank ; the barge was even beginning to fall broadside on, and it was to be feared that in this state she could not long bear up against the violence of the current. The bargemen's first attempts to get her off were unsuccessful ; they were obliged to resolve upon calling in the assistance of André and his crew.

At their first hail, the young boatmaster saw what had happened, and hastened in his small boat to Méru's help. They had just taken in their sail, and the barge being thus freed from the action of the wind, had stopped. André helped to stop the leaks, and fastened ropes to the masts, planks, and oars, which he threw overboard to lighten the barge ; then he and his crew shoving with their poles, succeeded, after prolonged exertions, in getting her off the bank, and bringing her again into the channel. He then piloted her in the same way as he had seen his father do, and brought her alongside of his own barge, to which he then returned.

Méru, who felt a little humbled by the help he had been obliged to accept, briefly thanked him, and busied himself in fishing all his spars up again in order to set sail, whilst the Charreyonne lifted her grapnel, and continued her course.

The manner in which Master Jacques had just proved his skill, had won him André's entire confidence ; and therefore, while he again took his place at the helm, he modestly asked for instruction from the old man, who accordingly taught him

how to know the depth of the stream, and the coming of the hidden shoals, by the colour of the water, or by its eddies. Thanks to these hints, André was able to diverge at intervals from the regular channel marked by the beacons, to slant by the shallows, and everywhere to take the shortest cuts. His father seemed to have a map of the Loire engraved in the deepest recesses of his brain: he knew the exact volume of water in each channel according to the time of the year; stated the rates of the currents; was acquainted with the best shelters for boats in case of the ice coming down; and told the names of every village on each bank. The bargemen were astonished; but André showed the most surprise of all. He was so little informed in the affairs of his own family, that he scarcely knew until then that his father had ever belonged to "the river-service." He would have questioned him about these past times, of which he knew nothing; but the life and spirits of Master Jacques had already sunk. He had seated himself at the bottom of the boat, with his arms folded and his head bent, and only answered Yes or No, like a man half asleep. However, when his son asked him what could have made him leave a trade he knew so well, he seemed to wake up with a start: he turned his eyes upon those about him in a sort of bewilderment and alarm; he moved, and half opened his lips; but the reply died away without a sound, his head sank again upon his breast, and André saw that he must not press his inquiry farther.

## CHAPTER II.

## A DISCOVERY.

THE two boats reached La Meilleraie rather late in the evening, and were moored close together. Thanks to Entine, the vexation Méru felt on account of his barge's mishap had not lasted very long. When André met him again at the inn, all clouds had disappeared from his brow. The young man made no allusion to what had passed ; and the old boatmaster, who appreciated his reserve, paid him in friendliness what he would have found it hard to pay him in thanks.

Some other boats were already moored at La Meilleraie. The crews were acquaintances, and had assembled to take supper together. Master Jacques remained in the barge by himself, making his supper, as usual, on a few crusts of coarse bread dipped in brandy, which had been brought to him.

At the inn, Méru had found Goodman Sorie, the father of the "service," and who, in some old business long since passed with a Nantes lawyer who wished to show his literary attainments, had been named by him the "Nestor of the Loire." His companions had taken this Homeric allusion of the man of law for a physiognomical nickname, and had unconsciously modified it by commonly calling him "Father Nez-Tors" (Wry-Nose). The old bargemaster had long ago given up navigation, though he happened to be then taking

a boat to Orleans for one of his grandsons who was kept away by sickness.

Méru and he had been acquainted in the La Vendée war, and both remembered that their last meeting had happened at the very place where they now found themselves again.

"Do you remember, my lad," said Soriel, who, in right of his ninety winters, called every one *lad* who was not as old as himself; "it was the day the great army was routed? Do you remember all those miserable wretches crowding together on the banks, and praying to God and man to take them over to the other side? They were full forty thousand, and there were eight boats for them all!"

"Yes," replied Méru; "then, too, to see the women run when our boats came near! it was, 'Take my wounded husband—my father—my son—this poor lad!' The dear creatures never asked to be taken themselves."

"Oh, it was a great day," resumed Soriel. "Look you, my lad, I never think of it without feeling a thrill to the marrow of my bones. It was then I saw M. de Bonchamp,\* who was just dying. The holy man was so weak that you could hardly hear him speak. So he kept making signs to the priest who was standing by him, to come close in order to hear him; and when the bystanders asked what he was saying, the priest always repeated the same thing—'Don't kill the prisoners.'"

"The 'Blues' killed plenty of ours, however," observed Méru with bitterness.

"As we did theirs," replied the old man. "At that time no one cared for another man's life; and it is a great wonder that any one cared for his own, for God knows the difficulty there was to keep it. When you had saved it from the guillotine or the bullet, you had still to save it from hunger, and

\* The Royalist army of La Vendée was routed, and General Bonchamp mortally wounded, at Chollet, in 1793, after which the fugitives crossed the river.—*Tr.*

that was no little matter. We bargemen found even the Loire had become a field of battle. Here, the batteries sent shot into us under pretence that we were serving the 'Whites'; there, the Royalists fired upon us from behind the willows under pretence that we were carrying provisions to the 'Blues.' So no more boats appeared upon the river, and the bargemen took to begging, unless they hired themselves to Carrier."

"And became *drowners!*" cried Méru. "Yes, yes, I know that there have been those in 'the river-service' who made the Loire into a great grave; but as true as I'm a Christian, if I ever meet with one of them, I will revenge the innocent blood upon him with my own hand."

"You will not meet any of them now," rejoined Soriel, "as all of us, honest bargemen, sentenced them long ago to go ashore, and none of them ever dared make their appearance afloat again, when the penalty was being sent, as they said in those times, to live in the Château d'Au;\*" but indeed it was a bitter time for every one, and the best way now is to think but little of it."

The master of the "White Flag" could not agree to this. He had passed through the terrible struggle of '93 in all the vigour and glow of youth, so that the general troubles were blended in his mind with the experiences proper to the period of his own life in which he had shared them. Moreover, he recalled his own courage in battle, his steadiness during the retreat, his presence of mind before the magistrates who were going to arrest him, his delight when he returned home to his mother without a wound, and with the white cockade sewed upon the breast of his coat. Each memory of a misfortune

\* The name of a castle on the banks of the Loire. When the prisoners in the famous "Loire Drownings" were on board the scuttled boats, if they asked where they were being taken, the drowners used to answer by a cruel pun—"To the Château d'Au."—[As English executioners doing the like work on the Thames might have said, "Going by water to Gravesend."—Tr.]

was in this way connected with that of a triumph or a joy, and those few months of suffering had only, so to say, proved to him what he could do, and what he was worth. Thus he spoke of that time with a warmth which, though he knew it not, was mainly the expression of contented pride.

As the bargemen were but slightly interested in this discussion, they left the table one after the other; and André himself observing that Entine had disappeared, resolved to return to the boat. When he reached it, Master Jacques was already asleep in the cabin with the rest of the barge's crew.

The young captain, whose blood was all alive, and his brain at work, was not inclined to join them yet. He wrapped himself in his goatskin cape, and began walking up and down on the tarpaulin which covered the cargo, and formed a deck.

The cold was now less bitter, and the night darker: scarcely did a few stars beam with a faint glimmer through the darkness. The fog hung upon the weeping willows, and crept over the Loire, which here and there looked like a mirror beneath the starlight. It seemed to André that the waters had risen, and that every now and then he heard a slight dashing noise; but he scarcely heeded it—his thoughts were busy elsewhere.

The last few days he had passed in the presence and society of Méru's niece had revived a love already of old date, and reawakened his impatience to know what he ought to hope for. Though the opportunities of meeting Entine had been frequent, the maiden's good-will towards him apparently plain, and he quite ready to believe that he should find no objection on her part, he had not yet proposed himself. The time seemed to him now come; he had only to find a favourable opportunity and a proper way of introducing the subject. But besides a mutual shyness, he felt that sort of anxiety

which accompanies all great resolves. The question at issue was of an engagement in which his whole life was concerned, which would be the occasion of lasting peace or trouble—of happiness or misery to him ; therefore he at once desired and dreaded the interview that must decide his fate.

Leaning against the boat's mast with folded arms and wandering eyes, he was conning over for the hundredth time the same doubts, without clearing them up, when a light rustling made him turn his head. Some one had come out of the cabin of the "White Flag," and was advancing towards the "Hope," which it was necessary to pass across in order to reach the shore. André recognised Méru's niece by her light and graceful step, in spite of the darkness. She stepped over the seats of the boat timidly and cautiously, and was about to set her foot in the second boat, when a movement of the boat-master made her give a little cry.

"What are you afraid of, Entine ?" said the youth in a very gentle voice, and advancing a step towards her ; "don't you know me ?"

Although his tone ought to have encouraged the damsel, she seemed still more disconcerted, drew back, and answered hastily, as if her presence in the boat at such an hour needed some excuse, that she had just been for her travelling basket, which she had forgotten in the cabin of the barge.

"Are you afraid that you will be accused of coming here to meet me ?" asked André with a tender smile.

"Oh, that would be very unjust," replied she, "for I thought you were still at the inn with my uncle."

"When you were gone, there was no reason for me to stay," answered the young bargeman ; "but since I have found you here, Heaven must have sent me back."

"Perhaps so, master," said Entine, who, notwithstanding her confusion, could not resist a joke ; "but as Heaven does

not usually send bargemen to damsels as if they were guardian angels, any one who found us talking together at this time of night, might think you were sent on another's account."

"Whose, pray?"

"The devil's!"

"Well, that would be a great mistake," cried André, smiling in spite of himself; "for I am come—I am come on my own."

"That, you know, is nearly the same thing," interrupted the damsel merrily. "Come, André, let me pass; the boat's crew may come back with my uncle, and then I should be quite disgraced."

"No," said the bargeman, approaching her, and causing her to retreat towards the end of her own vessel; "you shall not go away in this manner without having heard me. It was but just now that I was asking myself how I could find an opportunity of speaking to you; and since my patron saint has given it me, I will not leave you without having told you of the wound I have in my heart."

"It's of no use," interrupted the damsel slyly; "I only know receipts for chilblains, Master André. You must go to La Merode of Chalonnes—she knows words that will cure like balm."

"You only can say those that can comfort me," said the young man sadly and tenderly. "Do not pretend to misunderstand me, Entine; do not play with my trouble, like the cat with the bird she keeps under her claws. I am so afraid of displeasing you, that I am always silenced at once by you. So you can amuse yourself as you like with me without my being able to answer you; but there is no true bravery in that, and you should not use your wit against a lad who would find it easier to give you his blood drop by drop than to ask you if you will have his love."

His tone was so frank, yet so full of feeling, that the damsel was much affected by it. With a movement so quick that it seemed involuntary, she seized the young bargeman's arm and uttered his name, almost weeping. André drew her towards him with a joyful exclamation, and was going to repeat his question; but all at once she started, made a sign to him with her finger to be silent, and turned towards the other boat.

"What is it?" asked the young man.

"I thought—that some one was listening," whispered Entine.

"Where?"

"There, in your boat. I heard a step, and it seemed to me as if a shadow passed."

André mounted the side to see better. All was silent in his own barge; the shore was deserted, and the inn-windows were bright. He endeavoured to reassure the maiden, by bidding her recollect that all his crew were asleep, that those of the "White Flag" were still sitting with her uncle and Father Soriel, and that consequently they had nothing to fear. Then, emboldened by Entine's silence, he spoke to her more freely of his love, and told her of his plans and his hopes. The maiden, who was evidently struggling between uneasiness and affection, had seated herself upon the last bench, with her eyes cast down; whilst André, bending towards her, pressed for an answer.

"In the name of the saints, Entine," said he, after having exhausted all his own assurances of love, "say one word, one single word, to relieve my anxiety. I ask nothing you need ever be ashamed of. If you could see to the bottom of my heart, you would know that I am speaking to you as I would to the priest who has known and taught me from a child."

The maiden raised her head; her face wore a more serious

expression than the bargeman had ever seen on it before ; she turned upon him an open look, and full of feeling.

"I believe you, André," she said in a very tender tone. "I know you are a man of good name, and a good heart, who would not take pleasure in deceiving a poor girl whose father and mother are in their grave ; so I shall not answer you with stories, such as lads and girls usually tell each other. Ever since I have known you, I have seen nothing but true manliness and real honesty in you. I esteem you more than I do any other of your age ; and I shall not need much to induce me to show you I love you ; but my uncle must first give his consent. Orphan as I am, I have no other guardian, and I will obey him in everything. Gain his consent, and I can promise you, my dear André, that you will very soon have mine."

"All in good time," cried a third voice.

And Uncle Méru, who had crossed without noise over the tarpaulin of the first barge, cleared the boat's side, and came upon them at once. He was followed by Father Soriel and Francis, the latter of whom held back a little, with a foolish and sullen look.

The two young people showed some alarm at the surprise. Méru went up to his niece and took her hand.

"You have just given a good honest answer," said he with feeling ; "and I wish that all the bargemen of the Loire could have heard it ; kiss me—you are a good girl."

Entine threw her arms round his neck.

"Only," added the boatmaster, "it would have been better to have said it in some other place, and at another time ; private conversations by moonlight are not good for the health."

André hastened to explain that their meeting had been quite by accident.

"That's another thing, then," said Father Soriel ; "and Francis told a lie when he came to give us notice that you had planned a meeting in the 'White Flag.'"

"Then it was he I heard there just now," said Entine quickly; "may Heaven forgive him! But if he thought I was to blame, he had better have come and told me so, like a good cousin, instead of sneaking off and carrying tales."

Francis looked down without answering.

"No more reproaches," said Méru ; "the sad fellow is sufficiently punished by not being to your fancy."

"And that he may be more so, you must give the pretty one leave to follow the current of her own wishes," resumed old Soriel. "Come now, what can you object to in André?"

"Nothing," replied Entine's uncle.

"Then it's all settled," cried the old man merrily ; "I invite myself to the wedding ; and I mean to be a bridesman."

The master of the "White Flag" held out his hand to André, who seized it with such a lively transport of joy, that he could only stammer out a few words of thanks ; he was choked by his feelings. The maiden, leaning on her uncle's shoulder, smiled and wept at once ; the "father of the barge-men" himself wiped his eyes with the back of his wrinkled hand.

"Come, come, enough of this," said he ; "these youthful fancies touch you still, though they are over with you. Let the tree be never so old, good Méru, there is always a little sap left ; and if you bring it near the fire, it begins to work. But see, it's almost midnight, and it's my notion that things are so far settled that we may put off the rest till to-morrow, and go to bed, especially as here comes one who may hear us."

"It is my father," observed André.

"Master Jacques?" repeated Méru ; "bless me, we had

forgotten him, good people ! My leave is not enough for you to marry Entine ; you must have your father's too."

"I am ready to do my duty," replied André, going forward from the boat's stern to meet his father ; whilst old Soriec, foreseeing a family conference, discreetly withdrew and rejoined Francis.

In the meantime, Master Jacques having come out of the cabin, had proceeded towards the mast of the barge, slowly taken off his jacket, and thrown it on a coil of ropes. He then took up a boat-hook, examined the iron point, and stood still for a few moments, as if he were waiting for a signal. All at once the sound of a clock was heard, and the twelve strokes echoed through the distance. Master Jacques seemed to count them, and then walked towards the end of the boat. Just then André came up to him and addressed him ; but he appeared to hear nothing, went on, passed in front of Méru, and placed himself on the side of the farther barge. By the light of the stars, now shining more clearly again, they could perceive his livid face, his half-open and apparently breathless lips, and his glazed eyes, which he kept fixed upon the water ; he seemed like a corpse come forth from the grave to fulfil some unearthly achievement. Entine, quite frightened, retreated, with a stifled cry, behind her uncle ; and André, who had joined them again, looked at his father in alarm.

"May Heaven protect us!" said he at last. "His mind is awake without having given his body notice. I recollect now, that in my childhood my mother often got up to follow him."

"He is a somnambulist," said Méru, with a sort of fear mixed with pity. "Poor man, some shepherd of Sologne must have put a spell upon him!"

"Look, look ! what is he doing there ?" asked the maiden, coming closer to Méru.

Master Jacques had just lifted up his iron-shod pole, and

was dashing it furiously into the water. As he ran from one end of the barge to the other, he looked as if he were watching for some invisible object which he was trying to reach ; and at every blow of his pole, broken words escaped his lips.

" Still another !—well hit ! Here : and here again ! Heads everywhere, everywhere ! "

" Do you hear ? " asked Entine's uncle, taking André's arm ; " what does he mean ? "

" I don't know, " said the youth in a low tone, and growing pale.

Méru beckoned to Soriel to come near, and showed him Master Jacques. The old man looked astonished, seemed endeavouring to recollect something, then, with a start, he murmured—

" It is he ! "

" Who ? " asked Méru.

" Down with you ! " interrupted the sleep-walker, continuing to strike into the water—" down with the rascals ! "

" That's it, " cried the old man ; " he is dreaming of the scuttled barges : he thinks he is assisting at Carrier's marriages ! Yes, yes, I recollect him : he is Jacques the 'drowner' ! "

This dreadful discovery was received by as many exclamations as there were persons to hear it ; but with Entine and André it was an expression of surprise and grief—with Méru, one of anger. He sprang towards Master Jacques, whom he seized round the body, and would have thrown into the Loire if the old boatmaster had not prevented him.

" Let go, Father Soriel, let go ! " cried he, struggling. " I have sworn that the day one of these villains should cross my path, I would free 'the river-serviee' of him ! "

Again he tried to seize the sleep-walker, whom the violence of this attack had just awoke. André threw himself before

him, and begged him to spare his father. At the sound of his voice, the bargeman's fury seemed to change its direction, and turn with all its force upon the young man.

"Oh, so you defend him!" cried he. "It might be expected: you are of the same breed. You approve of what he has done, and would do the same if the opportunity offered! Wolf's blood will always show itself!"

"Do not speak so, Master Méru," interrupted André gently; "you know very well that just now I cannot answer you, because he who gave me life is concerned, and God commands me to respect him."

"And did He command you also to get my good-will by false pretences? Why did you conceal from me whose son you were?"

"Because I did not know it myself."

Méru looked incredulous.

"As I hope to be saved, I did not know it!" resumed the youth energetically. "He whom Master Soriel has just recognised can tell you the same."

"Dare you appeal to the 'drowner' as a witness?" cried the bargeman.

"We must take witnesses as they are; we cannot choose them, Master Méru," said André in a low tone.

"That may be," said the master of the White Flag; "but an uncle who has the care of a niece under age may choose her husband, I suppose? Well, sooner than give mine to the son of one of Carrier's butchers, I would take her, look you, with a millstone round her neck, to the great arch of Pirmil Bridge, and throw her headlong into the Loire."

Entine uttered a low cry, and André tried to speak; but the boatmaster did not give him time. He put his arm round his niece's waist, and without waiting for anything more, drew her towards the inn, followed by Soriel and Francis.

The young bargeman felt stunned by what had just happened, and seated himself on the edge of the boat, with his head between his two hands. The transitions from doubt to joy, and from joy to despair, had been so sudden, that he had need of a few moments to collect himself. However, this sort of weakness did not last long; he threw it off by a strong effort, and recollecting his father, he looked round him, but Master Jacques was no longer there. The moment he found himself alone, he had silently put on his jacket again, gone on shore, and taken on foot the road to Nantes.

After looking for him in vain in the barge and on shore, André returned to the former, there to wait for morning. The painful revulsions of mind he had just experienced, kept him awake a long time; it was only when the night was just past that fatigue got the better of him, and he fell asleep. His eyes opened again as the first morning rays fell upon them through the chinks in the cabin; and still drowsy, he raised himself upon his elbow with a sigh. Then all the recollections of the night came back upon him at once as he awoke, and with them all his bitter grief. He could doubt it no longer—all was indeed at an end for him; for he knew Méru and Entine well enough to be sure he could expect nothing either from the disobedience of the one, or the justice of the other. The maiden would remain submissive till death itself, from a spirit of duty; the boatmaster inexorable, from a spirit of party. Thus all his hopes—so long brooded upon in secret, hatched with such anxiety, and which he had seen the evening before ready to take wing—had now fallen to the earth for ever, struck by death!

He would not dwell upon this thought, which would have deprived him of all courage; and he hastened to get up, and make preparations for starting.

Méru's crew had already finished theirs, and he looked at

their boat as she glided alongside of his own, with her sails set. Méru was at the helm ; Francis was sitting in the bows with his bagpipe, as if he were on his way to some new threshingfloor, or some village festival. As he passed, he gave the young boatmaster a scowling look of insolent triumph. André did not answer it : his eye was seeking for the maiden, whom he could not see anywhere. Doubtless she was keeping herself shut up in the cabin, to avoid the pang of this last meeting. The young boatmaster felt his heart bursting ; but he overcame his emotion, and not seeing any of his own crew with him, he went to the inn to call them.

At the moment he entered, all the bargemen then at La Meilleraie were assembled round Father Soriel, and were talking eagerly. At sight of him, they stopped speaking ; those who had looked at him turned away their eyes, and room was made by the party as if they wished to leave him the place to himself. André had a vague impression that they had just come to some determination with regard to himself, and the blood mounted to his face ; but he did not suffer himself to be daunted. He looked round for his crew, and gave them notice that the vessel was about to sail. The bargemen turned away their heads without answering, and kept their places. The young man was surprised, and repeated what he had said, ordering them to follow him. The sailors, who were evidently perplexed, looked at Father Soriel. The latter then stepped towards the master of *The Hope* as their spokesman.

"We were talking of you, André," said he gravely ; "and you are come at the right time."

The young man was struck by the absence of the familiar "thou," which among the bargemen of the Loire is not only a custom, but a binding symbol of brotherhood.

"You know that 'the river-service' have determined to

have nothing to do with the ‘drowners,’ ” resumed the old boatmaster, who seemed to be choosing his words; “ every true bargeman has sworn to expel them from the barges, and to keep no terms with them. Now, you cannot keep this oath, since Jacques is your father.”

“ Well?” interrupted André, getting irritated by the old man’s slowness.

“ Well,” resumed he, with hesitation, “ those who cannot obey the laws of the river brethren, cannot belong to them either.”

“ That’s to say, then,” said the young man, his heart beating violently, “ that you mean to prevent my plying on the river?”

Soriel shook his head. “ Nobody can bar the river to the barge,” replied he; “ but no brother belonging to ‘the river service’ may henceforth help to work her.”

“ Yes, speak out!” cried André, striking his hands one against the other. “ Say at once, that you want to get rid of a boatmaster who has too much pluck and spirit for you; that you gain over his crew to stop him on his voyage; that you make use of the sentence passed against Master Jacques to ruin my boat.”

“ No, no; as I’m a man, it is not that!” interrupted an athletic bargeman, with a face of copper. “ The old man wanted to soften matters, and he has confounded them all.—The truth! I am going to tell it you myself. We Loire bargemen have our honour to keep up, and we will not have people of bad name among us. We turned out your father because he was a rascal; we turn you out because you are your father’s son.”

The bargemen confirmed what was said by a murmur of approbation. André, who had become very pale, looked round him with flashing eyes.

"Be it so," said he in a voice trembling with anger; "this is what you should have told me at once. Now I see that the noble corps of the Loire bargemen punishes the children for the fathers. A man may, indeed, without risk be a drone, like Barral; a drunkard, like Henriot; a freebooter, like Morel; a fool, like Ardouin;—but to be worthy of keeping among you, he must at least be no man's son, like Gros-Jean!"

These personal taunts, addressed to each of the boatmen present, raised a loud outcry among them; they all answered with insults or threats, and Gros-Jean came up to the young boatmaster with clenched fists. Father Sorieil threw himself between them, and tried to pacify them; but for some time his voice was unheard amidst the noise of their angry words. André, with his back against the wall, looked defiance at all his enemies; and a fight seemed inevitable, when the sound of a horn coming from the Loire, with a long, melancholy note, reached the inn. Every voice stopped, as if by magic.

"Do you hear that, men?" cried Sorieil.

"It is the warning horn!" replied the bargemen, rushing towards the door and window.

A small boat passed rapidly down, with the blue and yellow flag at the mast.

"The ice is out! the ice is out!" repeated the bargemen in one breath.

And without thinking more of André, they all went out and ran to their boats, which they made haste to unmoor, and were very soon under sail for their destination, which they hoped to reach before the ice was upon them.

The young boatmaster, too, returned to his vessel. But, deserted as he was by his crew, it was impossible for him to follow the rest; and therefore, after having secured her as well as he could by surrounding her with poles, planks, and

spars, he went to the helm, and leant his head upon his elbow. His boat, deserted, dark, and still, was the only one left in the little port, while he saw at various distances the sails of those just gone, gliding down the river; and far off through the morning mist, he could still discern the dim outline of a barge, from whence came the distant sounds of a bagpipe. It was Master Méru's vessel, hastening towards Nantes, and carrying away with Entine all the hopes of his life.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE ICE.

WHILST André was compelled to remain at La Meilleraie by the sort of interdict his comrades had put upon him, Master Jacques went on his road, and arrived at Nantes, whither he had been summoned by the mysterious letter which had induced him to leave Saint-George.

It was the first time for more than twenty years that he had seen this town, which for him was connected with so many gloomy recollections. He passed through it quickly, and directed his steps towards a well-known suburb, on reaching the outskirts of which, he at last saw before him the house he was bound for.

Standing alone, and beyond all the other houses, it looked like a sentry advanced into the country. A very high wall, the top of which was bristling with broken glass, completely surrounded it, so that the ridge of the roof alone was visible. When he saw it, Master Jacques slackened his steps; for the blood seemed to curdle in his veins. This lonely house he had often visited during those dreadful days, the memory of which haunted him in his sleep. There lived in it then the same man whom he was going to find there now: he was the last survivor of that formidable tribunal who had organized the reign of terror in the West, and had opened at Nantes

an artery, by which the blood of La Vendée was poured out. Thrown into the vortex of the Revolution at an age when the passions fever the imagination, and when ignorance of actual life always hurries the mind into theory, he had shown himself inflexible in what he believed to be truth, and inexorable in his means of making it triumph. Of a violent and gloomy nature, he mistook his own headstrong will for principle; he had at first, as so many others have done, confused his conscience by his exaggerated language, and then been led on to realize this language in action, till he had fallen from crime to crime into the lowest depths of the abyss. His punishment had been terrible: he had been driven from the society of men, and condemned for the last twenty-five years to keep revolving his past life, like Ixion's wheel, in his isolated abode, of which public opinion had constituted itself the jailor.

After hesitating a few moments, Master Jacques went round the wall to look for a little half-hidden door, at which he knocked. Nobody came, and he had to repeat the knock twice; at last he heard the creaking of a slow step on the gravel of the garden-walk, and a feeble and broken voice asked him what he wanted.

"Open the door," replied Master Jacques; "I am the person you expect."

The bolts were slowly drawn one after the other, and the door opened enough to admit the "drowner," who saw before him an old woman in a nun's dress.

"Sister Clara!" cried he, taking off his hat.

"Who names me?" asked the nun.

"What! am I so altered that you do not recollect my face again?" replied the "drowner," astonished.

The old nun raised her eyes upon him; they were as stony as those of a statue.

"Sister Clara can see no face any more," replied she.

coldly ; “but your voice seems like—yes, you are Cousin Jacques ! Come, come, *he* is in a hurry to see you.”

She walked before him with the help of a little holly stick, with which she felt her way. Jacques could hardly recognise the garden as they passed through it. The borders, formerly so carefully tended, were lost among grass and weeds ; and the unpruned fruit-trees spread their branches about in disorder, or hung half off the walls in every direction over the walks.

It was only when they came to the flower-beds in front of the house that the appearance improved, and showed that some careful hand had still tended the shrubs, and covered the flowers with straw to protect them from the frost ; while here and there a winter sunflower raised its perfumed stem, on which sparkled a few drops of hoar-frost melting in the last beams of sunshine. Seated by the door, to warm himself in these, and bathed, so to speak, in their golden glory, a sick man was dozing in an arm-chair, with his head leaning on one of his hands. Some birds, which had come to peck among the flowers, were fluttering at his feet, and pigeons were softly cooing over his head in a ray of the setting sun. Jacques stopped ; he had recognised his “great cousin,” as he had always called the old member of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

In spite of all the wasting of disease, he still had the same look of bold defiant energy. His hair was of a reddish brown, and cut very close ; beneath his shaggy eyebrows were deeply sunk two dark and piercing eyes ; his nose was prominent, and hooked like an eagle’s beak ; his lips thin but stubborn ; and his head was set upon one of those very short necks which usually mark a violent disposition.

“Is he asleep ?” asked sister Clara, who heard the dying man give no greeting to Jacques.

The latter replied in a low voice that he was.

" Speak louder," said the nun, with some harshness in her tone ; " his hours are numbered, and he must be awakened."

Doubtless the sick man heard these words, which were uttered without regard to him, for he opened his eyes, and instantly recognised Master Jacques.

" Oh, it is you !" said he, making an effort to raise his head ; " you are very late—but never mind, there is still time."

Sister Clara, who had groped her way to him, shook up the pillow which supported him. He looked behind the "drowner."

" Are you alone, then ?" resumed he. " I wrote to you to bring your son ; where is he ?"

" He is away," replied Jacques, wishing to avoid an account of what had passed at La Meilleraie in the morning.

The sick man fixed his sharp eye upon him.

" Was it not that he refused to come ?" asked he ; " tell me no lies."

" I have told the truth," replied the old bargeman, who bore his look steadily.

" I wish that I could have seen him," said the "great cousin," hesitating, and with vexation.

" What does the absence of the son signify, as the father is here ?" observed the nun shortly. " Cannot he execute your orders now as he executed them formerly ?"

Jacques started, and looked down ; the dying man looked up with an indomitable expression.

" You are right, sister Clara," said he bitterly ; " he obeyed faithfully that day, when, to save you, he risked his own life ; and"—

He paused.

" And yours," concluded the blind old woman ; " that is a remembrance we may venture to recal. There was some heart in saving a poor nun, only because she had been your mother's friend in the convent ; and I have not forgotten it."

"I know, I know," resumed the sick man rather impatiently; "when everybody turned against me—when everybody deserted me, you came and offered me your services—I will not say your consolations."

"God alone gives consolation," interrupted sister Clara coldly.

"Therefore you only bestowed your time upon me," continued the other. "For the last twenty years I have had some one who has superintended, managed, worked for me, yet I have not been the less alone. But no matter, others refused me what you gave, and I am not ashamed of acknowledging what I owe you."

"You owe me nothing," replied the nun, in a voice in the calm of which there was something as cold and cutting as steel. "What I have done, I have done from duty, not from choice. I would discharge every claim on me, for man's honour and God's glory."

"So," said the sick man, leaning his two hands with force upon the arms of his easy-chair, and trying to raise himself up, "you did nothing for my sake? You have only looked upon me as the instrument by which your faults were being punished, and so expiated? You have lived with me in my solitude for twenty years without a single feeling of sympathy?"

"There was a gulf between us," said the blind woman quietly; "you might have passed it by the Saviour's cross, but you would not. Christ will be your judge!"

"And this is why you refused to accept what I have to leave?" continued the dying man, raising his voice; "as you have done nothing for my sake, you will have none of my gratitude. Your God alone can recompense you! Well; go, then, and pray to Him, for I have no more need of you—go, you saint, whose kindness is a curse! Yes, my own feelings

tell me, that outside these walls, which have imprisoned me for so long, there are hearts less closely barred than yours. Yes, yes, time must have taught those who breathe the free air outside, how a man is ruled by circumstances, and carried away by opinions. Oh, I am sure that if that world which proscribed and cast me out could speak again now, its voice would be more merciful!"

"Hark!" interrupted the nun.

At that moment a hooting was raised outside the wall. The dying man's name was heard mixed with insults and curses. Almost at the same time a shower of stones was sent over the enclosure, and fell among the flower-beds, breaking down the flowers, and frightening away the birds. The sick man uttered a feeble cry; and the paleness of death gave place to a paleness yet more ghastly, as he heard the shouts of laughter from the children, who ran off after their daily attack upon the accursed house. For many years past this insult had been repeated every evening as the school broke up; and the terrible associate of Carrier could not get accustomed to it. He who had faced every curse unmoved, bent beneath that of children.

He raised his hand with an effort, to wipe away the cold sweat which bathed his brow.

"The world has answered!" said sister Clara, after a pause.

"Not the world," stammered the dying man, "but those who hate me! Leave me—leave me!"

The nun turned her head, fixed her marble eyes upon the agitated face of the dying man, as if she could see him through her darkness, and raising her hand with awful solemnity—

"There is still an hour left you," said she; "repent!"

Then turning slowly round, she groped her way back to the house.

Jacques followed her fearfully with his eyes, as if he saw before him the spectre of Divine Justice. When she had disappeared, there was a long silence. The dying man endeavoured to collect himself for an instant, and uttered half-delirious words cut short by inarticulate sneers.

"Repent!" stammered he; "ah! ah!—they little know—Fools! to believe that revolutions grow up of themselves—watered by Heaven's rain!—Ah! ah! ah!—let them wait—let them wait!"

Here his voice became more broken, and his words more confused; presently his lips alone moved, as if he was about to draw his last breath. Jacques in alarm came nearer, took his hands, and called him by his name. His trembling eyelids opened again, a tinge of life coloured his features, and he drew the old bargemaster towards him.

"Listen," murmured he; "your son is a good bargeman, is he not? Men esteem him; well, all I have I give him. Everything; do you understand me?"

And as the astonished Jacques was trying to stammer out his thanks, he interrupted him, by continuing in a weaker voice—

"Quick!" and then, pointing to the cushion of the easy-chair, "look there! What do you find?"

"A pocket-book!" said the bargeman, who had thrust his hand into the place indicated.

"That is right; all I have is in it. Bills payable to bearer, and bank notes. You understand me? they are for your son; the honest man whom honest people left in poverty—the villain they curse—will make him rich. In spite of them, I shall end by a good action."

As he spoke, a contemptuous smile was perceptible on his shrivelled lips; he seemed to try to say something more, but the death-rattle interrupted him. Jacques was frightened,

and called sister Clara, who came with the same unmoved countenance, and slowly knelt down by the arm-chair, whilst the "drowner" supported the falling head of the dying man. All three remained thus for a long time without speaking. The sun had almost set, the birds were silent, all was cold and gloomy. Nothing was heard but a hissing sound of breathing, ever growing fainter. At last, just as the last gleams of day were fading from the roof of the lonely house, the dying man stretched out his arms, as if seeking for some stay, opened his eyes, and then closed them with a deep sigh. Jacques, who was leaning towards him, listened a moment, then put his hand upon his lips. The blind woman raised her head.

"Is he in the hands of God?" asked she.

And Jacques answered, "Yes."

She got up quickly, and exclaimed—

"Then my trial is finished! O Lord, Thou hast taken me out of the den of lions, like Daniel; blessed be Thy name!"

She crossed herself twice, and slowly withdrew. The "drowner" looked round him for an instant in fear; then hid the pocket-book in his breast, and decamped; whilst the corpse, with its head hanging over the back of the arm-chair, and looking as if its ghastly features were still braving Heaven, was left deserted in the damp fog which was falling with the night.

Troubled by this death, by the recollections it had brought to mind, and by the unexpected fortune which had just made his son a rich man, Master Jacques at first went straight before him, without any purpose or object. He was under the influence of a sort of whirl of mind, which made everything pass before his eyes confusedly, and as if in a dream. In this state he walked through the outskirts of the town, reached the

quays, and passed over the nearest bridges;\* but at last fatigue forced him to stop, and brought him back to the realities of life.

He looked about through the now dark night, and perceived, at the top of one of the sloping causeways which go down to the Loire, a poor-looking inn, with leaning walls and sinking roof, which seemed to threaten to fall in. On the blackened sign, which was swinging by the door between two ivy wreaths, was the indistinct representation of an anchor made in tin, but black with age, and round which the sharpest eye had vainly tried to read the now effaced motto. However, Jacques did not fail to recognise immediately the "Silver Anchor" public-house, formerly frequented by all the young bargemen of the river. Its present deserted state was a new proof of the instability of human prosperity; but it was also a reason for the old "drowner" preferring it. Therefore he did not hesitate to push open the breast-high door which barred the entrance.

An old woman was knitting near the fire by the light of a resin candle; she got up, evidently surprised at the arrival of a guest, and at his asking for a supper and a night's lodging. She was about to call her granddaughter up to prepare everything for him, but, after asking only for bread and brandy, Jacques made her show him into a lower room, the window of which opened upon the banks of the Loire, hastily wished her good-night, and shut himself in.

Whilst André's father was, as usual, seeking to forget the past in drunkenness and sleep, there was one waking not far off whose hopes by that very past had all been destroyed. Just opposite to the "Silver Anchor," at a cable's length from the shore, a sort of square tower stood upon the river,

\* The rivers Erdre and Sèvre join the Loire at Nantes; and there are said to be no less than sixteen bridges over the network of streams thus formed.—*Tr.*

the dark shadow of which rose against the sky ; it was the floating mill belonging to Francis's mother. Entine had arrived there a few hours before with Méru, who had soon left her, while he went with his nephew to make their barge safe against the ice, which was beginning to appear in the river. After the customary exchange of questions and answers which a first meeting brings, the mill-wife showed her to the little room which was intended for her, on the top story of the mill, and then left her, promising her that, rocked by "Goody River," she would sleep like a child of three years old until next morning.

Notwithstanding this prediction, the damsel kept awake a long time. She was thinking of the events of the evening before, of the way in which her uncle had parted with André, and of the impossibility of ever making him accept the son of Jacques the "drowner" as nephew, and she worried herself with this sorrowful thought. Her saucy mirth was flown ; she seated herself on her bed, and her cheek rested on the pillow, which was wetted by her ever-returning tears, like the great drops of a summer's shower. Many hours passed thus. At last her tears stopped, her swelled eyelids closed, and, still sobbing, like a child overtaken by sleep in one of its fleeting fits of grief, she slumbered, with her two arms folded under her head.

A low dull sound, but long and deep, awoke her. Little by little it seemed to draw nearer, and to grow louder. It was a mighty rolling sound, which came continually on. Very soon lights began to shine, the great bell of the cathedral began to toll, and one loud voice proceeding from a thousand throats, rose on the air, and shouted, "The ice !—the ice !"

This terrible cry had sped along from the upper Loire, carried by messengers, who passed through towns, villages, and hamlets, bending over their panting horses, and waving a

flaming torch. At La Meilleraie, man, torch, and horse, dropped down exhausted ; André took up the torch, mounted a fresh horse, and had come to give Nantes warning of the approach of the scourge.

The news spread like wildfire. The crews of the vessels at anchor near the “Fosse” started from their sleep ; the bargemen ran to the river ; in an instant, both banks were lined with a moving multitude, and the bridges wreathed with rows of heads ; torches flashing, and calls and orders passing in different directions. Everything that could break the first shock of the masses of ice was thrown into the Loire. And now the water, driven against the banks with unusual violence, gave signal of their approach. At last the vanguard was in sight ; it barred the river right across, and came on like an army of white spectres shaking their snowy mantles in the night wind.

Those only who live on the banks of a great river know the frightful power of these avalanches of ice, which, coming first from its sources, gathering mass on their way, and at last reaching its navigable waters, with a steady and merciless force, carry everything away before them in one fell swoop. They only know the shudder which runs through every heart at the tidings of the scourge ; the agony of interest, which causes every foot to hasten to the river-banks ; the horrors of the thousand struggles carried on between man and these mountains of ice, which lift themselves high above the waters, and then break and crumble, and bury everything beneath their ruins.

Entine, when wakened by the rumbling and the shouts which proclaimed the coming ice, hurried to her aunt. Both of them were at first alarmed to see a mass of it collecting above the mill ; but they soon perceived that, as it rested firmly against the bank and the nearest buttress of the bridge,

it protected them like a rampart, and served to direct the course of other masses towards the more distant arches. Méru and Francis, whose barge was likewise within the range of this shelter, called to them from where they were to keep their courage up. The avalanche seemed, in fact, to be making for the other branches of the river; and as the boats there were in greater numbers, and the efforts to save them more noisy, the arm of the river where the mill lay moored was, by comparison, thrown into shade and stillness.

The two women, as they recovered heart a little, cast their eyes over the strange scene which was unfolding before them.

In front, and as far as they could distinguish, they saw nothing but a host of pale and gleaming forms, which followed one after another with ever greater speed, passed by with a rumbling and clashing sound, and then disappeared with a roaring noise beneath the half-blocked arches of the bridge. On their right, the inhabitants of the houses which lined the banks were being waked up one after another, and a light began to shine at every window, and voices to sound at every door; while on the left, stretched the dark, deserted, and silent meadows. In the distance, they could perceive the solitary and ruinous "Silver Anchor," where no light shone, and which seemed a spot more black than night itself. The mill-wife's eye was just resting upon it, when she saw a shadow slowly emerge from it, go down the slope which led to the river, and proceed towards the rampart of drifted ice by which the mill and Méru's barge were shut in. She soon distinguished a tall, thin man, who carried a handspike over his shoulder. When he came to the barrier formed by the ice, he stepped upon it as firmly as if he were on the deck of a vessel, and was not long before he reached the middle. The frightened mill-wife showed him to her niece.

"Look, look, Entine!" cried she. "Where does that un-

lucky man come from, and what is he looking for there? Has he lost his senses, or is he tired of life?"

"He keeps walking straight on, without looking at anything!" observed the maiden.

"Now he is on the edge of the ice! he is looking round."

Entine started. By the starlight, which silvered the bank of ice, she had recognised the fixed eyes and drawn features of Master Jacques. Mérus, who had just observed him from his boat, knew him again at the same moment.

"It is the 'drowner'!" cried he. "Ah, God is just! He has sent him to his punishment."

The sleep-walker, in fact, was proceeding along the bank of ice, at the end of which he would have come upon the deep water; but he stopped before he got to it, and raising his handspike, he began striking into the water, with incoherent exclamations, as he had done the evening before. His blows very soon fell upon the edge of the ice-bank, which might be heard to crack and break, till at last the violence of the strokes so shook it, that it split through its whole length. Mérus tried in vain to stop him by threats; the somnambulist was wholly under the influence of his customary illusion, heard nothing, and went on with his mad work. Francis uttered exclamations of the greatest alarm.

"Curses on the rascal!" said the bargemaster in a fury; "if the ice gets loose, all is done for. Push off, Francis, push off to the 'drowner.' I'll soon make him quiet, either alive or dead!"

The barge glided over the water that was left free, and as it neared Jacques, Mérus lifted his pole to strike him; but he was too late. One last blow had caused the riven ice-bank to give way in twenty places. The masses which it had hitherto stopped in their course rushed on all at once—rose one upon the other; and this mountain of ice giving way from

top to bottom, buried the barge and the sleep-walker together under its ruins.

The shrieks which came from the floating mill were so piercing, that the crowd heard them far off, and ran towards the bridge ; but the space, which was open a moment before, was already filled by an avalanche of ice, which bore down upon the mill with a hoarse roar.

With an instinctive impulse of self-preservation, the two women rushed within. Entine, out of her senses with fear, went up to the little room where she had passed the night, and fell down, incapable of any effort. Meanwhile, the fragments of the original bank of ice, increased in bulk and number by the new masses which the current was bringing down, had drifted upon the mill, and were dashing violently against the iron cables which kept it moored to the bottom of the river. At every onset was heard the grating of some broken chain, and pieces of the wreck were seen as the masses of ice carried them away. At last a terrific crash was heard : the building was borne up for a moment, then swayed, gave way, and was drifted down the stream.

A cry of terror was heard from the multitude which crowded the bridge. The mill came on by starts, its dark mass rising over the ice and water. One moment a block of ice struck the great wheels, and made them turn round rapidly ; and then another stopped them as suddenly. In this way the black and tottering building reached one of the arches of the bridge, bent forward as if about to sink below it, and then stopped for a moment.

This pause, which could be followed by no other, seemed to arouse Entine ; she saw the whole danger, and the height of terror gave her back the strength which its first coming had deprived her of. She rushed to the window, with her arms stretched out, and calling for help.

At sight of her, the spectators pressed to the parapet of the bridge ; every head bent forward, every arm was held out to her. Vain attempts !—the window was too far off. A buzz of pity and horror ran through the crowd. The great blocks of drift-ice still came closing in upon the mill, and its dark mass was sinking more and more. The poor girl pressed herself against the window, her whole thoughts absorbed in the one wish for life. She clasped her hands, and cried for help with sobs ; but the mill still kept sinking. Its roof was already on a level with the archway, when a man appeared standing on the parapet above.

It was André, who was no sooner at Nantes, where he had come to give notice of the ice, than he had thought of the danger the damsel might run in her aunt's mill, and who had now come up at the very moment it was sinking. He saw everything at the first glance. With two springs, he was on the arch before which the mill was floating ; he let himself slide along the edge of the buttress, reached one of the great iron rings cramped into the stone, and holding on to it by one of his arms, contrived just to reach the window. As he stretched out his hand, the dark building swayed upon the water ; and he took advantage of this motion to seize upon the maiden and draw her out. The two remained for a moment hanging over the abyss ; but by a desperate effort André got back to the ledge of the buttress with his burden. He had just set her down on it, when a frightful roar sounded at his feet ; an icy shower dashed over his face, and the mill at the same moment sank beneath the waters.

The bargemen ran with ropes to help him to get up the maiden, who was brought upon the bridge in a swoon.

Every endeavour to save her aunt was fruitless ; she was carried down in the ruins of the mill, and remained buried in the huge mass of drifting ice, like Francis and Master Méru.

A single day had thus deprived Entine of all her Nantes relations. As soon as she had recovered from the dreadful shock, and in deep mourning had attended the service for the dead in their parish church, she set out again for St. Vincent's hermitage, the only home now left her.

It was there that André saw her next. Méru's prejudices were not shared in by the farmer at the Hermitage; and knowing that his niece owed her life to the young barge-master, he received him cordially. Besides, a great change had taken place in André's position. The pocket-book bequeathed him by the inhabitant of the lonely house had been found at the "Silver Anchor" inn, with Master Jacques' coat and hat. The young man, who did not know from whence it came, believed he only inherited his father's secret savings; and this unlooked-for wealth was sufficient to silence every objection. Three months after the events we have just related, he married Entine at Saint-Vincent. He had not forgotten his expulsion from 'the river-service;' but he made no attempts to enter it again, and gave up the bargeman's trade.

The traveller who goes down from Angers to Nantes, may still see, between Chantocé and Ingrande, a workyard filled with oak-staves, deal boards, and wooden tiles. At the end, and in the middle of a garden, stands a cottage, its white front ornamented with vines and china-roses, and looking upon the Loire. This is André's chosen home: here he lives happily with Entine, on the banks of the river he loves, and within sound of the waters which recall to him so many memories.



# THE LAZARETTO-KEEPER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE YELLOW FLAG HOISTED.

At the end of the roadstead of Brest, in the passage which extends between Long Island and the point of Kelerne, rise two rocks crowned with heavy granite buildings. On the former, stands the Lazaretto of Treberon ; the other, which was formerly used as a burying-ground, and thus acquired the name, of the Isle of Graves, now contains the principal powder-magazine of the naval arsenal.

The two rocks are about six miles from Brest, and separated from each other by an arm of the sea. There is no sensible difference in the appearance of these little islets. Excepting the space occupied by the buildings, they only present the eye with rugged declivities, diversified here and there with coarse mosses and prickly furze. You would seek there in vain for any other shelter than the fissures of the rock, any other shade than that of the walls, or any other walk than the short terrace contrived in front of the buildings. Barren and naked, the two islands look like two enormous stone sentry-boxes, placed there to watch over the sea which roars beneath.

However, if the foot which treads them is kept prisoner within a limited circle, the eye from the height of this escarpment wanders over a vast horizon. Here is the Bay of Lanvoc, fringed with low and dark vegetation ; there Roscanvel, with its shady groves, through which peeps the graceful spire of its steeple ; further off, Spanish Point, bristling with batteries ; and lastly, on the furthest verge of the horizon, Brest half shows through a veil of mist her arsenals, her forts, and the hundred masts of her vessels. In the space between opens the gullet, the sea-gate of this marvellous lake, through which come in and out incessantly the roving barks which go to show the flag of France on the seas, or which bring it back from distant lands.

The report of a gun, of which the echo was still booming along the shores, had just announced one of these arrivals, and a frigate in full sail doubled the point by favour of a gentle breeze. From the height of the esplanade of Treberon, a man, wearing a cape of pilot-cloth, and a narrow-brimmed hat which showed his grizzled hair, was looking at the noble ship as she glided in the distance between the azure of the sea and of the sky. It was easy to perceive that the Lazaretto keeper—for it was he—was giving but a divided attention to this sight, with which his long residence at Treberon had made him familiar. His eyes rested for a moment with a sort of indifference on the frigate, which was beginning to take in her top-sails, and then speedily turned homewards, and remained fixed on the end of a path which led from the esplanade to the sea, upon a group, which seemed to interest him much more earnestly. The object of his contemplation was, in truth, one which would have struck the least attentive eye ; and a pupil of Phidias would have found in it the hint for one of those antique bas-reliefs of which the marble has become more precious than pure gold.

Two little girls and a goat were climbing the winding path together. The eldest, who might be eleven years old, held the freakish animal by one of those ribbon sea-weeds which look like strips of Spanish leather. Her black hair fell back on her dark neck like two raven's wings, and gave her face a hardy and slightly wild expression, which tempered the sweetness of her deep, soft eye. The younger, who was mounted on the goat, as if it were her usual steed, looked like a wild rose in all its dewy purity. A spray of heather, mixed among her golden hair fell almost to her shoulder, and gave her an inexpressibly picturesque and graceful air. The two sisters were forcing the goat to slacken her pace, but she submitted impatiently ; and from time to time they were obliged to double the frail bands which held her captive, and again and again to seize the garland of sea-flowers twined round her horns. Then there were long cries of joy, and bursts of laughter without end, broken by the shrill bleatings of Brunette, who stamped on the ground with her foot, and shook her head rebelliously. In vain had any other hands but those of Jeannette and Francine tried to make her even thus compliant ; but this latter had been her foster-child, and the goat had plainly not forgotten it.

Matthew Ropars had been looking for some time at this sort of playful contest between the frolicsome Brunette and his daughters, when he felt a hand pressed upon his arm ; he turned, and met, so to say, against his shoulder, their mother's smiling face.

"Look at the children!" said he, pointing out the romping group by a movement of his head.

"Heavens! Francine will fall," said the mother, making a step towards the path.

But he drew her back.

"Let her alone," replied he ; "you know there is nothing

to fear while Jeannette takes care of her ; without counting that Brunette loves them better than her own kids, and they return her love in full. God forgive me, if they don't love the beast next to us!"

"And M. Gabriel," put in their mother—"at least Jeannette. The child does not let a day pass without talking of him, although he was in the lazaretto for hardly more than a week, and that three years ago."

"Truly, the lieutenant is a man difficult to forget," replied Ropars ; "above all, for the little one to whom he gave so many kind words and promises. Isn't he to bring her all the wonders of India ? But unless some misfortune has happened to him, my notion is that we shall not wait long before we see him, as well as the 'Thetis.' "

"In the meantime, I must tell the children of another visit which will give them not a little pleasure."

"What is it?"

"One from our cousin and little Michael."

"Dorot coming!" repeated Matthew, looking towards the battery on the Isle of Graves ; "how do you know?"

"Have not we our signal language as well as the king's ships?" replied Genevieve, smiling. "See, he has hoisted three little red flags in his window ; that is to show he is coming here. Besides, I saw Michael go down to the boatman's house."

"Bravo!" cried Ropars, his face lighting up ; "your cousin and the boy shall sup with us—always provided that your larder is not as empty as our hospital."

Genevieve exclaimed against this, and enumerated with not a little satisfaction all her culinary resources, which had fortunately been increased two days before by the boatmaster, who was purveyor both to the powder-magazine and the lazaretto. Matthew promised to crown the feast for the

ordnance-keeper, by opening a bottle of old Roussillon, which had been long buried in the sand in his cellar.

At this moment the two little girls reached the terrace.

"Quick!" cried the mother; "come, somebody is coming here."

"M. Gabriel?" said Jeannette, springing forward with a cry.

"O no, silly one—cousin Dorot and little Michael."

The child betrayed a sign of disappointment, but Francine clapped her hands with exclamations of delight; the goat, left to herself, bounded along the sharp points of the rock, where she began browsing upon the tufts of briny grass; and the two sisters went down hand in hand to the landing-creek, whilst their mother returned to get everything ready.

As the latter had said, the special affection of Jeannette for M. Gabriel had already lasted several years. It dated from a quarantine performed at Treberon by the lieutenant, who, charmed by her unsophisticated grace, had shown her such kindness that the child had responded to it with a sort of passion.

M. Gabriel had entered the navy against his inclination, and had nothing of his profession but the uniform. In the midst of that life of changes, toils, and adventures, he was always dreaming of a settled home, and the peaceful joys of family life; he was one of those lovers of solitude born for a life among peasants, women, and children. When confined to the lazaretto of Treberon, he had brought with him a few favourite books, and his violin, upon which he played for hours together for the sole purpose of hearing its melodious strains. When he went out, Jeannette would run to meet him, and guide him along the rocks to their most hidden windings, where each day he discovered some unknown plant, or some new moss. When evening came, he would visit the

old quarter-master, and witness his quiet happiness. Genevieve would talk to him of her children; Jeannette would ask him for a story or a song; and at the hour of rest he would return to his cell with a calm mind and light heart. A fortnight thus passed away like an hour; so that when the quarantine was over, and he had to leave Treberon, his freedom only gave him cause for regret. He returned many times to pass whole days upon the gloomy isle; and at last, when he was obliged to embark on a distant exploring expedition, he promised to write to the lonely family. Ropars had since received some letters from him, and, as we have seen, was expecting him soon to return.

Just now, the visit announced by Genevieve exclusively occupied the whole thoughts of the lazaretto-keeper. He had remained by himself on the esplanade, from whence he continued to look towards the Isle of Graves. The distance permitted him to make out all that was going on there—to recognise the persons, and to distinguish their movements. So he could see Dorot going down to the boat, stepping the mast, and preparing the sail; and little Michael grasping the rudder with difficulty.

Before marriage had united the two families, the ordnance and the lazaretto keepers had known one another in the naval service, in which both had served—one as a quarter-master, and the other as a sergeant of artillery. When Matthew Ropars was appointed to Treberon, he was rejoiced to find his old comrade, Dorot, settled these many years on the Isle of Graves, with his wife, his son, and an orphan cousin. The lazaretto, being almost always empty, left him so much leisure that he was able to pay frequent visits to the powder-magazine, and to make himself known and appreciated there.

Dorot's cousin, Genevieve, took a particular liking to his

upright and calm disposition: Up to the age of sixteen, she had felt all the pangs of want; her cousin had then taken her from charity into his own house, where his wife made her at every moment pay dearly for her home; and thus the poor orphan was accustomed to expect nothing from any one, and to receive as a favour all that was given her. She therefore felt Matthew's frank cordiality more than another would have done, and accepted it with a half filial gratitude, with which was insensibly blended that touch of tenderness which women whose hearts are free bring into all their friendships. The intimacy between her and Ropars went on increasing every day, without either of them discovering the state of their inclinations. When Matthew, who already felt the weight of years upon him, saw the young girl in the full bloom of her fresh beauty, he never dreamt of asking her to share his life; and Genevieve, happy to see him every day, and to know he lived near, never thought of wishing for more. It was only when a place was offered to the latter near Brest, and a separation was in prospect, that they discovered how necessary each was to the other. When Ropars saw the tears of Genevieve, a consciousness of his own grief made him bold. He told her she need not depart if the Isle of Treberon did not displease her more than the Isle of Graves, and if his company pleased her as well as that of her cousin. The poor girl, with blushes and tears of joy, could only reply by sinking into his arms. The old quarter-master spoke directly to Dorot. They were married; and he took Genevieve away with him into his isle, the solitude of which he no longer feared.

The difference of their ages did not appear to affect the happiness of the keeper and the orphan. Both had that which makes marriage happy—a simple mind and willing heart. Children bound them still more strongly to one another, by enlarging the circle of their fireside. The younger was just

born when Dorot lost his wife, and was left with only his son Michael, a boy of thirteen.

Since this bereavement, the friendship of the two old comrades had revived. Their intercourse became more frequent. The boat in use for the two establishments was kept at the little port of the Isle of Graves, and was thus left at the disposal of the ordnance-keeper, who neglected no opportunity of coming to pass a few hours with his neighbours ; but notwithstanding the nearness, and the facility of the passage, he was yet not able to pay them daily visits. Dorot's constant superintendence was required ; the orders of the service were as sudden as unforeseen ; and he dared not run the risk of being absent too often.

His appearance at the lazaretto, then, was not so frequent as to have ceased to be an extraordinary pleasure. Father, mother, and children, equally thought it an occasion for keeping holiday ; and it was never without great delight that they perceived the signal announcing the wished-for visit, and the boat loosened from the little harbour and steering towards Treberon.

This time, as soon as Ropars saw it coming, he went down to meet it. Hardly had it touched land than Michael sprang ashore, embraced the lazaretto-keeper, and then the two little girls, with whom he ran on towards the house. Then Dorot landed in his turn, squeezed Matthew by the hand, and the two walked slowly up, talking as they went.

When they reached the top, they turned round by force of habit, and cast a look on the sea. The ordnance-keeper observed that the frigate had just finished taking in her last sails.

"Heaven forgive me, if she is not going to anchor," said he. "Did you ever see a home-bound ship stop so far from land, Matthew?"

"That's as it may be," replied the old boatswain, laughing; "you keep at a distance when you distrust a fort, or when you suspect a reef."

"But that's not the case now," observed Dorot; "the frigate need not fear either the castle cannon, which are her good friends, nor the roadstead, the bottom of which is as sound as a refitting dock. There must be something out of the common."

"Most likely the ship has to perform quarantine," replied Ropars. "The 'Thetis' is expected."

"Bless me! that's she," cried the ordnance-keeper, who was half shutting his eyes, and shading his brow with one of his hands, to see better in the distance; "it is the 'Thetis,' or I'm a heathen. I had her down yonder for a week when she was taking in her powder, and I know her again by her masts and her build."

"The 'Thetis'!" repeated Matthew; "now, then, we shall see M. Gabriel; here's a pleasure for Jeannette! Quick! I must let her know."

He was hastening on, but Dorot drew him back.

"Don't hurry, Ropars," said he; "never count too much upon what a ship brings; the people you expect are always those who are missing at the roll-call. You had better wait, and let the lieutenant give his own news of himself."

"You are right," replied the quarter-master; "and the more so, because I believe the frigate comes from Havannah."

"Who knows if she does not bring us tenants for the lazaretto?"

"So be it; they will be welcome. With Genevieve and the children one is never dull; but at times a little company is not unpleasant. You, in the Isle of Graves, have the ordnance station, which keeps you up to what is going on, besides inspections, and the relays of workmen at the powder maga-

zine, whilst here there is never anything new. Not one visitor in a year! So if some quarantiners do chance to come to us, at any rate we hear of what is passing on the mainland, and that will give us enough to talk about for months."

The ordnance-keeper shook his head.

"It's all well and good when they don't bring sickness," replied he; "but old people on shore talk still of a quarantine in which the lazaretto had neither earth nor rock enough to lay the dead in, and when they were obliged to throw them into the water with a cannon-shot round their necks, as they do in ships at sea."

"Christ spare us such a trial!" said Ropars, reverently touching his hat, as was his custom every time he pronounced the Saviour's name. "But you speak of a time now long past, Dorot; Heaven grant we may never see it again! There are no heathens here, and I've a trust that the favour of God will rest upon us."

Dorot nodded, in token of agreeing with him. In fact, this confidence, springing from a simple faith, had hitherto been justified by experience. During the thirteen years past, the keeper had taken none but persons in health into quarantine, although they had all been obliged to submit to the detention and seclusion which the formal regulations prescribed as a security and test. Even these were rare exceptions. Treberon, like all lazarettos, was oftenest left unoccupied, and the keeper remained there on his watch alone, like a perpetual look-out, posted in advance of the mainland to keep contagion off it.

As they talked, Dorot and he reached the house; Genevieve received them on the threshold, with the three children around her, holding her and speaking to her at the same time. After exchanging the usual expressions of friendship, she went in

with the two keepers, whilst Michael wandered along with Jeannette and Francine towards Brunette, which had perched herself on the top of a rock, from whence she looked at them bleating. The boy, who was accustomed to follow his father's sheep over the crags in the Isle of Graves, tried to get to her; but the mischievous creature sprang along the escarpments from point to point, always seeming ready to be caught, and always contriving to escape the instant his hand touched her.

While the children thus pursued her with a thousand loud calls, and a thousand shouts of laughter, Ropars and Dorot entered the dining-room, where Genevieve had begun to lay the cloth.

It was a room of moderate size, furnished by the keeper himself at the time of his marriage, and ornamented with a few sea-engravings, amongst which was conspicuous a portrait of Jean Bart, the nautical Hercules to whom the traditions of the forecastle have attributed, as we know, every kind of superhuman exploit and impossible adventure.

After seeing his guest seated, Matthew went for the bottle of Roussillon, which he brought up all white with sand, and crowned with the cap of green wax that certified its noble birth. Dorot, in a friendly way, exclaimed against such magnificence, and informed them he could not stay long, as the officer in command at the port in the Isle of Graves required the boat to return before sunset. Genevieve consequently made haste to get the meal ready, and to call the children in to supper.

The conversation between people whose whole existence is limited by the narrow bounds of two islets, could not have much variety. Matthew talked of his dead-lines, set among the creeks of Treberon; and Dorot of his wild cherry-tree.

The latter might be looked upon as the "pitfall of pride" at which the worthy and unpretending sergeant always stumbled.

No other keeper before him had succeeded in preserving his shrubs from the effects of the sea-breeze ; it was the only tree that had ever been seen in the two islets. Lucullus himself could hardly have been more proud of the first cherry-tree he brought from Persia to grace his triumph. Dorot, though humble as to all else, drew himself up with dignity when the question concerned his poor stunted crab-tree ; he only showed it occasionally to friends and superiors, and even they had to ask it as a favour. Things are like men, and for the most part obtain the importance which is ascribed to them, instead of that which they actually possess. Thus overrated and husbanded, the reputation of the wild cherry-tree of the Isle of Graves spread from Plougastel to Camaret ; it was spoken of everywhere as a wonder. Dorot's pride had increased in proportion, and had just been carried to the highest pitch by an event as extraordinary as it was unforeseen. He brought the news to Treberon, but would not make it known at once ; every possible conjecture, as in Madame de Sévigné's famous letter on the marriage of Mademoiselle, was first to be tried. At last, when they had "given it up," he consented to speak out, and he declared—that the cherry-tree had blossomed !

There was a general cry of surprise and wonder. Ropars and Genevieve being always confined to their little island, had not seen a tree in blossom for many years ; and the two little girls never recollect ed any. They questioned Michael loudly, and both at once.

"Were the flowers gold-colour like broom, or blood-red like sea-furze ? How could the flowers turn into cherries ? Must they wait long for them ? Would the tree have red garden-cherries, or black mountain ones ?"

Dorot cut the questions short, by saying that he would come the next morning to fetch all the family to see the won-

derful tree, and dine at the Isle of Graves. The ecstasies of the sisters may be guessed : their mother could not quiet their laughter, and their clapping of hands. They cried out, "To-morrow ! to-morrow !"—like the watchmen of *Aeneas*, who cried "Italy!" when they descried through the purple mist that final object of so many efforts, and of so much hope.

When the sergeant saw their impatience, he proposed to take them with Michael that same evening. There would still be sufficient daylight on their arrival for them to see the cherry-tree, covered with its summer snow, and their parents could come for them the next day. The children supported him by their entreaties. Ropars smiled, without answering, and looked as if inclined to consent ; but Genevieve exclaimed against it. What would become of her without Francine and Jeannette ? Often, even now, if she awoke in the middle of the night, she was uneasy if she did not hear their gentle breathing ; she would get up shivering, and would grope along in the dark to their bed, that she might touch them and hear them breathe. Then what would it be if they were no longer there ? Could she sleep in peace, and not fancy some danger near ? She should dream that the powder magazine had taken fire, or that the Isle of Graves had gone down like a wrecked vessel. All this was said between laughing and crying. The two little girls, who at first had longed to go, now hung round their mother's neck, moved by sympathy, and crying out that they would stay. The ordnance-keeper urged it no longer ; and he and Matthew again took the path which led to the beach, followed by the mother and children, who were once more silent.

The sun was sinking below the horizon, leaving a track of purple and gold on the channel of the Gullet. The breeze was beginning to move over the bay, ruffling it with dancing ripples ; the perfumes of flowers came in gusts from the main-

land, with the tinkling of the evening prayer-bell, and the lowing of the cattle as they came home. Everywhere was felt the tendency to repose, and that inexpressible calm, which from outward objects reaches the senses, and enters into the depths of the soul. Heaven, earth, and water seemed with one consent to have lowered their voices, to mingle together in one melodious murmur. The two keepers and their families, without analysing the soft yet invigorating tranquillity that surrounded them, felt its influence. They went down the path in silence, and slackened their steps, as if to prolong a pleasure which they wished to taste with full relish. When they reached the boat, however, they were obliged to make up their minds to part. Jeannette made the sergeant promise to come and fetch them early the next day : they then set sail ; and the boat darting over the pliant waves took its course towards the powder-magazine.

Just at the moment they reached the mid-channel between the two isles, a ship's barge, which they had been so occupied in leave-taking as not to have noticed sooner, appeared to the leeward of Treberon. Her bold make, her dark colour, crossed by a single white stripe at the water-line, and the perfect trim of her sails, would have been enough to tell what she was, even if the dress of the double row of sailors which lined her sides had not proclaimed her a craft of war. When she crossed the boat steered by the sergeant, she kept off abruptly, and by the last glimmer of daylight they distinguished the yellow flag of the health office.

At this sight, Genevieve and the children uttered a cry. They all three knew that these were guests coming to the lazaretto ; they would put the island in quarantine, and forbid all communication with those outside it. The next day's visit must be put off indefinitely, and the cherry blossoms would be over before they were again free.

This deathblow to their new-born hopes was something so sudden and so unexpected, that Francine and Jeannette could not at once reconcile themselves to it. They looked at one another disconsolately, and began to sob ; whilst their mother, taking a daughter in each hand, mournfully returned up the path.

Genevieve herself felt a weight at her heart. On reaching the battery, she involuntarily stopped. The boat with the rose-coloured sail, which carried away all their visions of meeting and of holiday-making, had disappeared ; but the black barge was there at their feet—she had just reached the shore—imprisonment, sorrow, and sickness in her train. Genevieve kissed her two children, with difficulty restraining a tear which rose to her eyes, and hastened in, without caring to see more.

Meantime, Matthew had gone to receive the quarantiners, and to open the lazaretto for them. When he returned, he was rather pale, and his face had an expression by which Genevieve was struck ; but at the first question she put to him, he hastily interrupted her, to ask her what had become of Jeannette and Francine.

“Don’t you see them ?” replied she, pointing to the two little girls, who were sitting in the dark, still sobbing, with tears in their eyes. “Did you think they had gone away with their cousin ?”

“Would to God they had !” murmured Matthew, in anguish, and low enough not to be heard by the children.

Genevieve looked at him thunderstruck.

“Why ?” asked she ; “what has happened ? For God’s sake, speak, Matthew ; what is the matter ?”

“Well,” replied the lazaretto-keeper, “the matter is that death is in the isle !”

“What do you mean ?”

"What I have seen, my poor wife! The barge of the 'Thetis' has just landed the doctors and nurses, with eight sick not one of whom will see the mainland again."

"Heavens! what is it?"

"The yellow fever!"

## CHAPTER II.

## THE PATH DOWN THE CLIFFS.

To him who lives inland, the yellow fever is only one of a thousand diseases known merely by name. Neither the traditions of his family nor his own recollections can connect it with grief or fear; but among our seafaring population this word strikes like a funeral knell. It not only recalls the thought of dangers encountered, but it re-awakens sorrows—old or recent. In a place where every family has one object of love in some distant land, this terrible disease is too well known by the sight of widows and orphans it has made. Like the storm and the reef, it is one of the great enemies of life. The sound of its name produces the same effect as the wind when it whistles, or the waves when they roar. When men hear it, they look at one another, and they think of the absent, perhaps of the dead.

But Ropars now thought chiefly of the present. In truth, he had more cause to tremble than others. Formerly, when in the midst of a raging yellow fever, he had seen the crews of all the fleet cut down around him, and himself saved as by a miracle. The thoughts of this “slaughter,” as he called it, had remained impressed on his mind; and he had too often spoken of it to Genevieve for them not to feel their courage

shaken. Neither of them feared for self, but each for those whose lives were dearer far. Matthew's first thought rested on his wife and children ; Genevieve's first movement was to gather them together within her arms, crying out that they must fly. The old sailor had some difficulty in making her understand that to leave the isle, even if it had not been dishonourable for him, was now impossible. The barge had sailed again for the frigate, and the yellow flag was hoisted on the lazaretto flagstaff. Quarantine had begun for all those who happened to be at Treberon—not one of them could henceforth pass its limits ; and Ropars showed Genevieve the pinnace sent by the military authorities, which was just about to moor at half-cable's distance from the isle, and to prevent all shipping from coming near it. They were, therefore, shut in with the infection, and condemned to run all risks to the end.

However, Matthew's uneasiness, in which the suddenness of the event had a share, did not last long. The quarter-master soon recovered his old firmness, now softened a little by the affectionate habits of family life ; and tried to calm the fears of Genevieve, by qualifying his own words, and making light of the danger. After all, they had not here the conditions which favoured the pestilence elsewhere. They had not to contend against the oppressive sun of the Havannah or Brazil ; they had not to do with a formidable contagion which was gaining more and more upon them, like a fire, and leaving only the dead behind—but with a sickness on the decline, and from which, with a few precautions, they might easily escape.

The first and most indispensable of these was to avoid the rooms occupied by the quarantiners, and never to remain to leeward of the lazaretto. Jeannette and Francine were warned immediately. Genevieve explained to them at great

length all that must be done, now with threatening and now with moving words. First, she told them that sickness or even death would be the punishment for the least disobedience; then when she saw them get pale with fear, she encouraged them again by her kisses and endearments.

Matthew added to her advice something more distinct and more certain. In the morning, he marked out an enclosure with stakes and a cord, which was to serve the children for a sanitary line. As an additional precaution, the goat herself was brought into the enclosure, where she was tethered, and fed on hay.

The keeper left off his usual intercourse with the lazaretto servants and doctors. He would have been ignorant of the fate of the quarantiners, if every evening the sight of two or three men going down towards the sea-shore, and the sound of a hand-bell which warned him out of the way, had not told him that they were going to dig a grave. The gaps were, however, soon filled up by new sick men brought in the frigate's barge; for the fever did not seem to decrease or take a milder form. No convalescent had yet appeared on the terrace of the lazaretto. The pinnace-boat belonging to the health office came in every morning, but without touching the shore. It landed the provisions or medicines by the pass-rope put up in the creek, received the surgeon's report at the end of a boat-hook, and then set sail with a rapidity which showed the fear excited by the contagion.

However, after the first few days, the fears of Ropars and Genevieve were a little relieved. The blows which death was striking around them were silent and unseen, and the sting of anxiety insensibly grew blunter. When they saw that life was possible in contact with the formidable disease, both of them half forgot that death was possible too. What happens to the inhabitants of a besieged town, who no longer start at

the report of cannon, happened to them : the bell might sound every evening, and the barge bring new sick and dying every morning—still the unbroken recurrence of the danger accustomed them to it, and custom produced a sense of security. At times even, Genevieve forgot it all, and would begin her songs again ; but at sight of the yellow flag, or at some sudden thought which went through her heart, she would stop abruptly, and the song ended in a sigh.

Ropars had inquired for M. Gabriel on the arrival of the first patients. The fever had not then attacked him ; but the interruption of all intercourse with the lazaretto servants and the boats' crews had prevented him renewing his inquiries. Several parties had landed, without his being able to inquire after the lieutenant, when at last he received a note cut through with scissors, and soaked in vinegar. It only contained these words, written in pencil—

“ I am here. If I live, we shall meet again ; if I die, take this letter to the captain of the *Thetis*, and claim my large mahogany box, for Jeannette.”

GABRIEL.”

The writing was almost illegible, and betrayed a hand shaking with the fever. Matthew, who was both grieved and shocked, now forgot every precaution, and ran to the lazaretto ; but the doctor would not let him see the lieutenant, about whom he seemed to have serious uneasiness. In the evening, the fever became worse, and allowed but little hope ; the next morning, there was no longer even that.

Jeannette, who had been left in ignorance of the name of the frigate in which the fever was raging, did not suspect the danger of her friend ; but she and her sister had not the less lost all their mirth. Kept prisoners within the enclosure marked out by their father, both of them were sitting mournfully near the tethered goat, which lay at their feet, and seemed

to disdain the hay scattered before her. Jeannette, with Francine leaning on her lap, had proposed in succession all the games they knew; but the child hung her head, and fixed her eyes on the sea.

"Then what will you do, Zina?" asked she, saddened by her sadness.

She did not answer. Her elder sister put her hand on her fair hair, and played for a moment with the ringlets.

"You want to go down there and see Michael, don't you?" resumed she, stooping towards the little girl; "but it is of no use, for the cherry blossoms are over."

"Then do you think the cherries are ripe now?" interrupted Francine, turning her face—which, from lassitude, was less rosy than usual—towards Jeannette, and with her great eyes full of curiosity.

"I don't know," replied her elder sister; "mother will tell us. But we must now think of something else; you know very well we must not go to the powder-magazine."

"Nor to the end of the isle, nor anywhere," added Francine, falling back again on Jeannette's lap.

The latter, who wished in any way to amuse her, then pointed to the goat, which had just got up. Brunette, suddenly roused from a doze, was making such fantastical evolutions round her tether, that the child's melancholy gave way, and she could not resist a burst of laughter. Jeannette at first joined in her mirth; but fearing that the movements of the headstrong creature would break the cord, she put out her hand to prevent it.

"Let go, let go!" cried Francine, laughing. "See how she stands up! see how she dances! Bravo, Brunette! faster, my pet, faster!"

The child knelt on the sand, and clapped her hands with cries of joy; whilst the goat, seemingly excited by her voice

and the noise, redoubled her frolicsome tricks. Suddenly the stake, which so many jerks had loosened, gave way, and was torn from the ground. The creature bounded aside, and no longer feeling any restraint, made towards the other end of the isle.

At first, the two sisters screamed out ; then, with unthinking impulse, they both rushed forward in pursuit of her. They passed the boundary-cord, and were soon far away among the escarpments, calling Brunette, which, as was her custom, waited bleating for them to come up, and then darted off as they reached her. Thus, carried away by the chase, they reached the top of the isle, followed the slopes which went down to the sea, and arrived at the bottom of the ravine over against their home. It was only there that Jeannette became conscious of their disobedience. Out of breath, she stopped, and keeping back her sister in her arms, she cried—

“We must go no farther, Zina. We ought not to have come here ; mother told us not.”

The little girl looked round her, and she, too, remarked the place where they were. It was a large cleft in the solid rock of the isle, at the bottom of which grew tufts of large ferns and flowering broom. On the right and left, the sides of the rock were covered with creepers ; sea-grasses with purple pods, and fox-gloves, with their long stems loaded with rose-coloured bells, grew out of the crevices.

At sight of them, Francine gave a scream of delight. It was the first green, and the first flowers, she had seen since the strict regulations had kept her on the barren flat where the keeper’s house stood. So she could not resist the temptation ; and she escaped from her sister without listening to her, and running away, she disappeared into the midst of the flowering bushes.

After calling her in vain, Jeannette followed to bring her back ; but the child ran from spray to spray without stopping. In vain, at every handful of flowers, did Jeannette cry, "That's enough!" Francine replied, "No, no ; more!" and heaped into her apron, which she held by the two corners, all that her hands could pull. The ground itself must fail her before she could agree to leave her harvest. At last, when she was loaded with grasses and wild-flowers, which fell in garlands to her feet, she consented to take once more the hand of Jeannette, who carefully pushed back the prickly furze, while she tried to find the path.

The two children had just reached the border of the little thicket of heath and broom, when they heard the warning hand-bell above their heads. They stopped, and looked up : four lazaretto servants were coming down towards the ravine, with their funereal burden. They were following the only practicable path down the rock, and the two little girls could not go on without meeting them. They drew back in terror into the bushes which still hid them, and waited there, pressing close to one another.

The hand-bell rang at what seemed convulsive intervals, and each time nearer. At last, they heard the bearers' heavy tread along the rock, and saw their dark shadows visible in the twilight ; they came on towards the little oasis where the children had taken shelter.

On reaching its entrance, they seemed to consult for a moment, then proceeding into the midst of the prickly bushes, they turned round by the clump behind which the two sisters were crouching, and stopped, saying—

"It is here!"

Francine hid her head in Jeannette's lap in terror ; but she, more bold than her sister, softly moved the branches back, and then perceived a grave ready dug in the gravel.

The bearers had placed the body, wrapped in a coarse sheet, on the ground ; they took a sack out of one of the clefts of the rock and emptied its contents into the grave. The white powder, which rose in a cloud, diffused the pungent smell of lime as far as the children. The men spread it carefully over the bottom of the grave, as a bed for the corpse, and sprinkled it with water fetched from the sea. All these preparations were performed in ominous silence. Nothing was heard but the clink of the shovel against the rocky soil, and the monotonous sound of the little waves as the evening wind drove them in upon the beach. Jeannette, with stretched-out neck, eyes wide open, and a heart wrung with painful oppression, continued looking.

Just then two of the bearers took the body and brought it up to the grave. There was nothing between them and the children but the clump of shrubs. As they grazed by it with their load, a gust of wind blew aside a corner of the coarse winding-sheet ; a ghastly head appeared by the closing light of evening, and Jeannette uttered a stifled cry.

The fall of the corpse into the grave prevented its being heard ; but that glance had been enough—the child had recognised the face of M. Gabriel !

She recoiled with an inexpressible shock. It was the first time death had struck her sight, and it appeared to her under circumstances which filled her with grief and fear. She clung to Francine, and began to tremble in all her limbs. The noise of the earth and gravel falling into the grave seemed to turn her to stone. It was only when the four grave-diggers had left the ravine, and disappeared along the path, that her sobs burst out. Francine raised her head and asked what was the matter ; but receiving no answer, she threw herself into her arms, sobbing in her turn.

The tears of her little sister seemed to stop those of Jean-

nette, who tried to suppress her sobs, and began to kiss and console Francine.

"Hush!" stammered she, half choking in spite of herself; "don't be afraid—don't cry!"

"What's the matter, Jeannie, what's the matter?" repeated the child, taking her sister's head between her two hands, and kissing her wet cheeks.

"It is nothing," replied Jeannette, her accent belying her words; "I was startled."

"Are the men gone?" asked Francine, looking with fright in the direction of the grave.

"You see they are," replied Jeannette, shuddering.

"What did they come here for? They were carrying something: it was a dead man, was it not?"

Her sister put her hand upon her lips.

"Don't speak of it, Zina," faltered she, again overwhelmed by her sobs.

"Did you see him?" asked the child, half curious and half frightened.

"Yes, O yes!" stammered her sister, "and I knew him again—it is M. Gabriel!"

"Your kind friend!" cried Francine. "Are you really sure, Jeannie? And is he there—under the ground? Oh! let us go; I am afraid—I am afraid!"

She threw herself again into her sister's arms, who tried to pacify her, and to restrain her own tears.

"Peace, Zina!" said she in a broken voice; "we must be quiet—we must dry our eyes, or mother will be uneasy."

And suddenly getting up, she added—

"Hark! I think they are calling us; quick! quick! let us go up."

At these words the two little girls got up, and leaving the

ravine returned in all haste to the battery, which they reached trembling and out of breath.

Genevieve was there waiting for them ; but the night, which had set in, prevented her remarking their trouble. She led them home, heard them both say their prayers together, and they went to bed without having said anything of the adventure in the ravine.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE WAY BY THE REEF.

JEANNETTE slept badly ; and the next day when she got up, she looked pale and worn. Genevieve perceived it, and anxiously questioned her, but the child replied she had nothing the matter with her. But her eyes filled with tears, and her voice trembled at each question.

So she passed the day in lassitude. In the evening she felt more exhausted, but still she suffered no pain ; her night was restless, and the next morning Ropars sent for the doctor of the lazaretto.

He looked at the child, and asked several questions at which Matthew's brow grew gloomy. Genevieve, whose eyes went from the doctor to her husband, perceived it. She felt her heart sink within her. The moment they crossed the threshold, she followed them, shut the door quickly, and stopped them.

"It is the sickness, is it not ?" asked she with anguish.

She dared not name the yellow fever. The doctor seemed unwilling to answer.

"Oh ! I am sure of it !" cried she, confirmed in her suspicion by his hesitation. "Then all our care has been of no use ? It is come—it is all over !"

She sank upon the stone bench at the door, and covered her

face with her apron. The doctor tried to comfort her with vague hopes ; but it was evident that he had no expectation of success from anything he could do. He was already conquered by the inveterate force of the infection, and only continued to fight against it from duty, and when hope was gone, like those soldiers who, for the honour of their flag, silently devote themselves in defence of a post abandoned to the enemy. Then, perceiving that his words, far from calming Genevieve's grief, seemed to increase it, he turned towards the keeper, to whom he briefly repeated the prescriptions he had already given for the sick child, and then went back to the lazaretto.

Ropars remained for some moments in the same place, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the ground ; but a loud sob from Genevieve made him raise them. He took her hand—

“The time is not yet come for despair,” said he, with a gentle firmness ; “when God has declared against us, you will have the rest of your life for tears. At present, let us attend to our duty by doing what the captain orders.”

“And did he say nothing ?” cried the mother, who wished in her heart that the doctor had combated her fears more decidedly ; “did he give no hope ?”

“We are in God’s hands,” replied Matthew simply ; “and as long as He does not declare His will, we may trust that all will go well ; but if the dear child must leave us, let us show at least to the last moment how precious we feel the charge.”

Just then they heard the child’s feverish voice.

“Ah ! she calls me !” cried Genevieve, hurriedly rising to go in.

Ropars stopped her.

“First wipe your eyes,” said he, passing his own hand

fondly over the moist eyelids of the poor mother ; " Jeannette must not think that you are anxious. Her life may depend upon it ; do you understand ?"

" Yes, yes," replied she ; " never fear, Matthew, I will cry no more ;" and she tried to dry her eyes, which always filled again with fresh tears. " There, no one can see anything now. Besides, the doctors may be mistaken, may they not ? And then—God will have pity upon us !"

" We must hope so," replied the keeper, much affected ; " but while we look to Him for pity, it is for us to show resignation. Come, my brave heart, smile on your child—it will do her good. And before you go back to her, kiss me—that will give us both courage !"

Jeannette's mother threw her arms round her husband's neck with a fresh burst of tears ; but she stopped at the voice of the sick child calling her a second time, and with a last effort she forced her despair back into the very depths of her heart, and darted into the house with a calm brow and a smile upon her lips.

In the meantime, Jeannette rapidly grew worse. By the evening the fever had greatly increased. She talked in turn of her sister Francine, of Michael, of the cherry-tree in blossom, of her kind friend M. Gabriel. Sometimes she thought she heard him, she called him—she wished to know if he had brought her the presents he had promised ; at other times, the recollection of the scene in the ravine returned to her memory. She cried out that he was dead, and that she heard the earth being thrown upon him in the grave.

The doctor came back several times, and prescribed more remedies, without being able to stop the progress of the disease. It was a dreadful night for the poor mother, holding her child, who was becoming more and more light-headed, in her arms. When the sun rose, her restless delirium ceased ;

but only to give place to the lethargy which precedes death. At last, towards the middle of the day, Jeannette opened her eyes, and heaved a sigh—it was her last !

The blow was too surely expected for Ropars and Geneviéve's grief to be loud ; the pain of their loss had, so to say, come first—both had drunk it drop by drop during that long agony. The mother's calmness, however, had something so haggard in it, that it would have terrified one less overwhelmed with sorrow than Matthew. She would herself pay the last duties to her child ; she combed out her beautiful black hair, dressed her in her best clothes, laid her out, and joined her two hands over her heart, as Jeannette used to do in sleep. All these offices were performed slowly, quietly, with a sort of satisfaction ; and often she added her kisses. Scarcely did a tear steal at intervals down her cheeks marked with burning spots, or a slight trembling agitate her hand, as it fulfilled its mournful task. At last, when she who had brought this child into the world, and who had fed her with her milk, and cherished her with her love, had herself wrapped her in her shroud, she went to the window, plucked a white gillyflower—the only one the sea-wind had spared, and scattered its leaves over the winding-sheet.

In the meantime, night had come. As the shadows gathered round the bed, the form of the dead showed dimly under its linen covering, like some half-finished statue ; and above hung an ivory crucifix, with drooping head and extended arms.

Geneviéve fell on her knees at the bedside, and remained a long time with her head resting on her clasped hands. She gently murmured a prayer ; but though her lips repeated all its words, its sense did not reach her mind. When she had finished, she got up mechanically, and looked round her ; her brain was a dark chaos. She raised her two hands to her

forehead, which she pressed with a stifled cry, as if she would arrest that whirlwind of confused and heart-rending thoughts. There was a struggle for a moment between despair and resolution. Then the latter gained the advantage, and she went towards the door and opened it.

Her husband had withdrawn to the battery with Francine, to spare her the painful sight of the laying out. She perceived him standing near the parapet ; the little girl was close to him, and resting her head against his knees. Since the death of her sister, she had not uttered a word. As she stood motionless, with open eyes and compressed lips, she seemed trying to understand it. Her two little hands hung idly down, and her bare feet were as if fixed upon the ground.

On seeing her thus, in the light of the rising moon, which played on her fair hair, Genevieve seemed to come to herself ; a gleam passed over her pallid features, she breathed more freely, and a flood of tears streamed from her eyes. She threw herself towards the child, whom she raised in her arms in a sort of passion of grief, which Francine immediately took part in by a burst of kisses and sobs. For a long time there was only an exchange of broken words and unfinished sentences. The little girl asked for her sister ; and her mother, whose grief was renewed by these questions, tried to stifle them with her kisses. At last, when quite exhausted, she relaxed the embrace with which she was holding Francine, and she felt some one gently taking her away.

It was Matthew, who put the child on the ground. He drew her mother a little further off, and obliged her to sit on the stone bench set against the parapet. She endeavoured to get up, and stretched out her arms.

“ My child ! ” stammered she through her sobs ; “ I want my child ! ”

“ Directly, thou shalt have her,” said Ropars, who, as is

the custom of the Breton peasants, only said “thou” to Genevieve when under strong emotion;\* “but first thou must listen with all thy heart, for what I have to say is of great consequence.”

“Ah! I wish I could!” said she, holding her head between her two hands. “But do not be angry, Matthew, if it is impossible; I hear something out there, you see, which silences everything else; it is her death-rattle, dear husband! And, do you know, I love the pain it gives me to hear it—I can think she breathes still. Oh, Jesus! who would have said that I should grieve not to hear the death-gasp of my child!”

Ropars put his hand upon the head of his poor wife, who began to sob again.

“Compose yourself,” resumed he, firmly yet tenderly; “God would have us submit, and not despair. Our child is now in His paradise, where she has no more need of us; but she leaves a sister behind her whose life is in our charge.”

“What do you mean?” asked Genevieve, stopping her tears, and raising her now anxious eyes towards him.

“Don’t you understand?” replied the keeper, in a lower tone; “the fever’s blast is like the sea’s—it spares no one, and at any moment may send the living to join the dead!”

“O God our Saviour! is this a warning?” asked Genevieve, clasping her hands. “Can the child be struck? Have you remarked anything? Ah! tell me the truth, Matthew; tell it at once. I had rather be killed by one blow!”

“The child has no other ill but her grief,” said Ropars; “but if she stays in this air of death, who can promise us that she shall escape?”

“Wo to us!” cried Genevieve, raising her clasped hands

\* In other parts of France, the usage is not so restricted among relations and intimate friends.—*Tr.*

above her head. "Why did you tell me? I wished not to think of it; now I shall see her die every hour. God forgive you, for so stirring the knife already in my heart!"

"If I touch it, it is only to draw it out," observed the quarter-master. "This is no time to shut the eyes and let the squall come, but to work the ship to save our darling. If she remain on the isle, you have but too much chance of making her winding-sheet, Genevieve; she must go directly."

"But how? what way is there?"

Ropars looked round him, to be sure that nobody heard him.

"There is one," replied he cautiously.

"The magazine-boat?"

"No."

"The pinnace?"

"You know she lies there to watch the isle."

"Then what can help us?"

"The tide."

Genevieve looked at her husband, without understanding him.

"It is now the spring-tide," resumed Matthew; "in less than an hour the sea will have ebbed enough to leave but four feet of water over the line of reefs which run from Treberon to the Isle of Graves. With a stout heart, and God's help, a man may risk the crossing. I will carry the child to Dorot."

And as the mother could not restrain an exclamation of terror, he added quickly—

"Not so loud, unhappy woman! do you wish to betray me? Except the magazine-keeper and myself, nobody knows of this sea-road; we have often taken it when we were fishing together, and always got in safe."

"But not in the night," interrupted Genevieve; "not carrying a child!"

"The child is hardly any weight, and the moon is at its full," resumed Ropars, rather impatiently. "Besides, I have been thinking over the matter all the evening; there is no other way. I have made up my mind; and I will do what I ought, whatever happens. Your words may weaken my confidence, but they cannot keep me back. Then try rather to keep up my courage, as is the duty of a good wife, and get everything ready for the child. When the last point of the great rock is bare, it will be time for me to attempt the passage, and for you to pray God to open us a safe crossing through the sea."

The boatswain's tone was so determined, that Genevieve saw the uselessness of all opposition. In the ordinary acts of life, Matthew had no will of his own, and formed a determination rarely; but when he had done so, and once declared it, he maintained it unshaken. Besides, when the first shock was over, his explanations and assurances somewhat calmed Francine's mother, and he succeeded in half convincing her. But there was still the child, and Ropars dreaded her opposition or her fright. Genevieve fetched her, and the father and mother seated her on their knees together.

"You want to see the cherry-tree blossom, don't you?" said the latter, kissing her.

The little girl hung her head.

"Not now," replied she, in a very low tone.

"But this is the very time," added her poor mother with an effort; "down there you will have more liberty. You will be happier; you will have Michael to play with."

"No," said the child in a broken voice; "I had rather stay with Jeannette."

Genevieve clasped her hands, closed her eyes, and her voice failed her. It was Ropars' turn. He drew Francine to his heart, and whispered in her ear—

"Listen to me: we are in trouble. You would not give us more, would you? You love us too much for that."

Instead of answering, the child threw both her arms round her father's neck, and pressed her little rosy cheek against the sailor's wrinkled face.

"Yes, yes; I was sure of it," continued Matthew. "Then you will do everything we ask you?"

The child agreed.

"Well," continued Ropars, "you must go and spend a few days with Uncle Dorot; and as we have no boat, I must carry you across the channel. You will be still when you are in the middle of the sea if you have your father's shoulders for a boat, won't you?"

The child shuddered.

"I would rather stay here," said she hastily.

"That's impossible," replied her father. "I must carry you to the powder-magazine; it must be so, and we must go directly. But if you are not brave, if you scream, the way will be more difficult, and perhaps some harm may come to me. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, yes; I will not go," replied the little girl, who was now beginning to tremble with fear.

Genevieve took her again into her arms.

"Hush! hush!" said she, pressing her lips upon her head, and rocking her against her heart. "Children must obey—God says so. Do what you are told—for your father—for me—for Jeannette! If she could speak, she would tell you to be good and brave. Do you wish to make her unhappy in heaven?"

"Oh, no!" cried the child, throwing herself again into Matthew's arms.

"Then you mean to come?" said he.

"Yes," whispered the little girl.

"And you won't be frightened, nor speak a word?"

"No."

"Come along, then!" said the keeper, who had risen and looked over the parapet. "The great rock is bare—we have no time to lose."

He took Francine in his arms, and went quickly down one of the paths leading to the beach. Genevieve followed, in unutterable grief.

They all three reached a rocky point, which projected a long way into the waves. It was the end of the line of reefs which connected the powder-magazine and Treberon.

Ropars put the child on the ground, while he made out his course. By the light of the moon, the channel looked of a pale-green hue, streaked with little white lines, formed by the waves lightly crested with foam. Their undulations were so gentle, that you might have fancied it a green corn-field chequered with ox-eyed daisies. Beyond lay visible in the moonlight the whole of the Isle of Graves, with its yellow buildings, its long slated roofs, and its lightning-conductors piercing the clouds. So calm was the night, that the step of the sentry before the stone watch-box in the corner of the esplanade could be heard. Between the isles, and a little in the shadow, the pinnace was silently lying on its two anchors.

Ropars scrutinized everything strictly: he showed Genevieve the course of the road under water, marked by a slightly deeper tinge on the surface of the sea; threw off his coat and hat; then taking both his wife's hands, as she looked at him distractedly, he said—

"The time is come, Genevieve; kiss me, and pray God of His mercy to be with us."

The poor woman at first returned his embrace, without being able to say a word. But when she felt him letting go

her hands and turning towards the child, who was a few steps off, she gave a shriek ; she lost her self-control ; she forgot all that Matthew had said to her, all she had promised him ; and threw her arms round him in despair and terror.

" You shall not go," stammered she, " you shall not go !—It is going to death ! By your marriage-vow, stay with me —be my succour, and share my trouble ! Will you leave me alone with Jeannette ? Look, look how great and deep the sea is !—you and Francine will be lost in it ! Oh ! if it be God's will, let us die ; but let us die together ! Matthew, I cannot bear that you leave me ! you shall not carry the child away ! you shall not go !"

Ropars tried to quiet her, and made an effort to disengage himself from her arms. But she clung to him, without listening to anything ; and when he reminded her that she had herself, a moment before, persuaded Francine to go—

" I was wrong !" said she wildly ; " I wish it no longer ! If you leave me I will follow you, and you must answer before God for whatever happens ! Matthew, do not tempt me !—Matthew, have pity on me ! What have I done to you to make you go thus readily to your destruction ? do you no longer love life with me ? Oh ! if I have been wanting in my duty, do not remember it against me, dear husband ! If the violence of my grief has made you angry, forgive me ! I will cry no more, Matthew ; I will be what you wish. Stop, think again, forgive me ; but say that you will stay here !"

She had gradually sunk upon her knees, and she held Ropars' hands, and pressed them to her lips. He tried to raise her.

" Enough, Genevieve," said he, in a voice in which emotion contended with impatience. " I thought you were braver ; this is not what you promised me. Recollect, unhappy woman, that the time is passing."

Genevieve sobbed, and renewed her prayers. He turned an anxious look towards the sea, and saw the lowest points of the great rock dry. More delay would increase the danger, and might render the crossing impossible. Matthew took Genevieve abruptly by the arms, and raised her up with her face close to his.

"As you would be saved, listen to me!" said he in so decided a tone, that she shuddered at it. "For the first time, I must remind you that I am your master—and if you are not more discreet, perhaps it may be the last. But by the God who made us, you shall obey, and without more contention! The child's life is in question—nothing shall stop me. Stay there, I command you; and do not take a single step, nor utter a single sound, or, as sure as I'm my mother's son, I will never forgive you till the day of judgment!"

With these words, he seated the thunder-stricken Genevieve on a sandbank, ran to the little girl, whom he lifted on his shoulders, and rushed with her into the waves.

When the mother turned round at the noise of the splashing water, he was already on the causeway of the sunken reef, and the waves were rising to his chest. She tried to get up, but her strength failed her, and she could only utter a feeble shriek. Matthew heard it, and turned round. He saw through the darkness the dim form of Genevieve half fallen back on the rock, stretching her clasped hands towards him. His heart, which he had hardened by a resolute effort, gave way with affection. He looked at the deep, green sea, with its gulfs yawning all around him; above his head he heard the breathing of the child, who was panting with terror; and thinking that the poor woman, from whom both had just been torn, might never see them again, the love and pity he felt for her filled his eyes with tears. He stopped, in spite of himself, in the midst of the surging billows,

turned his head to the shore, and cried out in a suppressed, but very gentle voice—

“Do not cry, Genevieve; and may God bless you! All will be well!”

Then, without waiting for an answer, which he feared would weaken his courage, he proceeded on his way, his eyes fixed on the line of water which indicated the direction of the reef.

Soon, however, he failed to perceive the peculiar colour of the waves which made this line easy to recognise from the shore. Now that he was in the sea, he could no longer see before him anything but one uniformly-tossing plain, without difference of movement or of colour. He was obliged to direct his course merely upon the rock of the Isle of Graves in which the causeway ended, and the sharp crags of which could just be distinguished in the distance.

Matthew advanced, sounding each step before him with a broken boat-hook with which he was provided; but in spite of his caution, the way became more and more difficult. The inequalities of the rocks exposed him to continual risks of slipping. Borne up by the waves, deafened by the deep roar around him, groping for an uneven and unknown path with a gulf on either side, he proceeded with that extreme but resolute slowness, in which all impatience is mastered, and the whole being concentrated in each movement. His steady gaze seemed to pierce the liquid veil of waters; his hands, grasping the boat-hook, seemed as though they would plant it in the reef; and his feet strove, with convulsive energy, to make out the right path before they took it.

In this way he reached the middle of the channel, where the pinnace lay at anchor. All was silent and motionless. The cries of “All’s well!” sung out at intervals by the night-watch, had for some time ceased; even the two dark

figures, so long immovable at their posts, had disappeared. The sailors of the watch, confident that their look-out was useless, had doubtless fallen asleep.

Matthew, fearing their waking, tried to avoid peril by hurrying on; but just as he entered the shadow which stretched over the moonlit waves behind the pinnace, the bank of rocks, which was gradually lowering, suddenly failed him. Francine felt him sink, like a boat going down, and the water splashed over her hair. She could not repress a piercing scream.

Her father drew her to his breast in alarm, and put his hand over her lips; but it was too late. The scream had evidently been heard, for a dark figure suddenly raised itself from the bows. Ropars had only time to throw himself under the taffrail of the pinnace, and to seize a boom to which he clung.

One of the watch came astern, where he was soon joined by his comrade.

"Confound me, if I did not hear a scream!" said the first.

"Sure enough, it as good as woke me!" added the other.

"However, I've looked out to no purpose. I can see nothing."

"Nor I."

Both were leaning over the sea, which kept on its pleasant murmur, with nothing to be seen upon it but the light ripples with their embroidery of foam and phosphoric light. The second watch seemed to be disturbed by something, which made his voice falter.

"I say, Morvan," resumed he cautiously, "can the Roscanvel and Lanvoc boats have been so often here, and not left some Christian under water?"

"What then?"

"What then?" repeated the sailor, who seemed divided

between fear and shame. "Why—you know what they say—I did not invent it. They say that drowned men who die in their sins leave their spirits in the waters which swallowed them; and every year, at the day and hour of the mishap, they cry out in agony for our prayers."

"And you believe that, do you, Lascar?" said Morvan with a laugh which had more noise than confidence in it.

"It's not I," replied the sailor, "it's my mates. But still, the voice was not like any other—it was sharp and shrill, like a child's, as you might say."

"Come, come, what nonsense!" interrupted the first sailor, evidently disquieted by his comrade's explanation. "You see there's nothing to be heard now—there's nothing but moonlight on the sea, and it's a raw, cold night. How lucky we have both kept our allowance of wine. Let's go and drink it: it will hearten you up."

The two sailors went off. After waiting a moment, Matthew again put the child upon his shoulders, charged her to be silent while he encouraged her once more, let go the rope, and endeavoured to regain the causeway; but he had lost his course, and could only find deep water. He was obliged to swim with his precious burden, but hoped that a few strokes would bring him back to the reef: he was already beyond it. Fresh attempts were not more successful; and twenty times he renewed his search, to come always on the same deep water.

Alarmed, and out of breath, he struck out at random, trying to find ground, without being able even to distinguish the Isle of Graves from the Isle of Treberon. After having turned and re-turned for a long time, struggling against the water, into which he plunged deeper every minute, and passing again and again from despair to hope, until his strength and spirit were quite worn out, he felt that he was beaten at

last. His breathing grew painful, and a mist fell upon his eyes—everything became a whirling chaos to him, and his senses were failing him. Yet another instant, and Francine and he must sink beneath the billows! The pinnace, which he had tried to avoid, and which he no longer distinguished, was their last chance for life. He collected his remaining strength to utter a shout for help; but a still heavier sea stifled it on his lips. Half dead, and no longer having more feeling than the instinct of self-preservation, which outlives the will, he struggled yet a moment, thrown from wave to wave, and then felt himself going down! But all at once he stopped; his feet had found the reef. They made a firm footing on it—he righted himself again; and the water, which was blinding him, seemed now to subside. He took breath, looked before him, and perceived at about a hundred paces off, the scarped rock of the Isle of Graves.

A few minutes sufficed to reach it. As he touched the shore, he sank down, calling Francine in a faint voice.

The terrified child could only answer him by throwing herself into his arms, in which he clasped her for a long time. His first thought had been for her—his second took him back to Genevieve, who had to wait till he came back to know that they were saved. He got up, still tottering, and, taking the little girl by the hand, began to climb the scarped ascent leading to the terrace.

He had to go round the powder-magazine in order to avoid the sentry posted at the corner which overlooked the great roadstead; and when he reached the ordnance-keeper's door, he knocked gently, for fear of being heard by those outside. Fortunately Dorot slept the light sleep of an old soldier; he awoke at the first tap, and appeared at the window.

“Open the door,” said Matthew in a whisper.

“Ropars!” cried the sergeant, confounded.

"Not so loud! and come quick," replied the sailor; "our life depends upon it."

Dorot came quickly down, drew the bolt, and brought them in. Matthew stepped inside the threshold, with the child clinging to his knees.

"Heaven help us! where do you come from, Ropars?" asked the sergeant.

"You see," replied the seaman; "we come from the sea, which we have crossed to get here."

Dorot drew back, with an exclamation of surprise.

"Is it possible?" cried he. "In God's name, what has happened, to make you risk your life in this way?"

"What has happened," replied Matthew, "is, that Jeanette died this morning of the fever!"

"What do you tell me?"

"What you asked me, Dorot; and as Genevieve and I would save the other, I have brought her to you."

"Heaven reward you for the thought!" said the sergeant; "the child is welcome!"

He held out his hand to Matthew; but he did not take it.

"Think well of what I ask of you," resumed he; "perhaps the child may bring the sickness and sorrow to you here."

"I hope not," replied Dorot; "but God's will be done!"

"Recollect, too," persisted the quarter-master, "if the thing is heard of, there is a chance of your being punished for having broken the quarantine."

"Then man's will be done!" replied the sergeant with simplicity.

"But think again"—

"I will think of nothing more, Ropars," interrupted the keeper; "you have said enough, and too much—no more

words ; you have brought me the little one, and I take her."

He stooped down to Francine, took her in his arms, and carried her up to the little closet which Genevieve had formerly occupied ; he himself took off the child's wet clothes, and laid her in Michael's old cradle.

The father, who had followed them, remained standing at the door with a look of gratitude too deep for words. Only when Dorot rejoined him, he grasped one of his hands, and held it silently in his own. The other, wishing to avoid a burst of feeling, began to speak to him of the best way to conceal the little girl's change of home. It was enough if no one could notice her having gone from Treberon ; as for her being at the Isle of Graves, that would awaken no suspicion, as the artillery party who were on duty at the powder-magazine, and who might have wondered at this increase in the keeper's family, were to be relieved the very next morning.

Ropars being satisfied on this point, they agreed upon signals for transmitting the news of each islet to the other. By repeating these several times a day, they would at least spare all the pangs of uncertainty. At last, when all was settled, Matthew went to the window and looked out.

The wind had freshened, the sky showed fewer stars, and a thin mist began to creep over the sea.

"It is time to go," said he, turning to the sergeant ; "may God repay you for what you are doing, Dorot ! for Genevieve and I must remain in debt to you for ever!"

"We'll talk of that presently," replied the keeper ; "the important matter, and what now troubles me, is how you are to get back."

"Never fear," replied Ropars ; "now the child is safe, I shall cross the channel as if I were going to church. The legs are firm when the heart does not tremble. I wish I were

already on the other side ; I have delayed here too long for Genevieve, who is waiting for me."

"Go, then, since you must," said the sergeant ; "but for God's sake, Ropars, be cautious ; and don't forget that you have two other lives to take care of as well as your own."

"I will do all that a man can do," replied the quarter-master ; "rest assured, cousin, that I have no wish to die to-night ! But enough talk, time goes, and I must not wait till the tide is in.

He went towards Francine's cradle to wish her good-bye ; but the child, tired out by all she had gone through, had just fallen asleep. One of her arms was doubled under her head, and lost among the dishevelled ringlets of her golden hair. The other lay upon her breast, and clasped a little relic formerly given to Genevieve herself, but of which she, with credulous yet motherly self-sacrifice, had now deprived herself to save the child. Although her breathing was regular and easy, it was broken at intervals by sobs ; and her cheeks, which were beginning to recover their rosy colour in her sleep, still bore traces of tears.

Matthew looked at her for some moments with silent affection ; then he slowly stooped and lightly kissed Francine's little hand, then her head, and then her cheek. The child, without opening her eyes, moved restlessly ; he drew back, and said, in a whisper—

"Yes, yes, sleep on, God's little lamb !—I will not wake you."

He seemed again to fold her to himself in a look overflowing with love ; then he turned to Dorot, and took his hand.

"I leave her with you, cousin," said he, much moved ; "nobody knows what may happen, only I rely upon your kind heart ; and if ever the child becomes an orphan"—

"God keep her from that!" said the sergeant ; "but if

such a calamity should come upon her, Matthew, be sure that she will then be Michael's sister!"

"Thank you!" hurriedly interrupted the seaman; "that is just what I wanted to hear. Now I go at ease, and prepared for everything."

"But you will not go as you are, all shivering and tired?" said the sergeant. "You must take something to strengthen you."

"No, nothing!" interrupted Ropars; "you have given me all the strength I need, by assuring me that the child shall not be left without help. Providence will do the rest. Give me your hand, and good-bye till we meet again, here or elsewhere!"

They embraced affectionately; then Matthew went down to the shore, and again plunged into the sea. Although the tide was beginning to rise, the passage back was accomplished without much danger. He safely reached the great rock of Treberon just as the sea was covering it, and ran to the place where he had left Genevieve. She was no longer there.

Surprised to find she had not waited for his return, he hastened up the path, reached his door, which he found open, and called her. Nobody answered. The darkness prevented him from distinguishing anything. He groped his way to the fireplace, and hastily lighting a lamp, looked about him by aid of its flickering rays. As these fell upon the bed in the recess, his eye discerned close by the white figure of the dead laid in its shroud, another darker figure stretched motionless. Matthew drew near in terror. It was Genevieve in a swoon.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE HUSBAND'S RETURN.

THANKS to the doctor's care, Ropars' wife at last recovered her senses ; but it was only to fall into convulsions, which were followed by the complete prostration of all her faculties. The whole day passed without her waking from this lethargy, which appeared half sleep and half death. It seemed as if so many shocks had shattered her existence, and the vitality which still lingered in her languid frame appeared but as the last movements of a machine about to stop. However, towards evening, the fever appeared ; the sick woman gradually passed from her torpor into a delirious excitement ; she recognised Matthew only at intervals, and, as her grief returned with her senses, she again relapsed into wandering.

None of these symptoms seemed to belong to the disease which was ravaging the lazaretto, and the baffled doctor showed his inability to understand them. Accustomed to the rough practice demanded for the robust frames of our sailors when sick, he was, like the generality of his class, necessarily unacquainted with the sufferings of more delicate constitutions. He was, therefore, utterly perplexed by the case of this woman dying of a complaint of which he in vain taxed his memory for some precedent. He could not conceal his embarrassment, and the need of more experienced advice. One to

whose science these mysterious and formidable symptoms were familiar, might find a clue where he perceived only confusion ; and might point out a remedy which he dared but merely guess at.

This candid though painful confession inflicted a new torture upon Matthew. Enclosed within the sanitary line which forbade the approach of strangers to Treberon, he was unable to send for advice which might perhaps save Genevieve's life ; in vain he saw at his feet boats for crossing the sea, and, in the distance, the town from which help might be procured : an invisible but insurmountable obstacle chained him to his unhappy lot.

Two days were spent like a long death-struggle, in alternations of speechless dejection and wild despair. After passing whole hours by the bedside of his dying wife, when he saw the disease, after a momentary lull, wake up with greater violence, he would rush to the edge of the reefs, look at the waves in the midst of which he was kept a prisoner, at the armed bark which guarded the channel, at the ravines of the isle dotted with new-made graves, and, pressing his clenched fists against his forehead, he would curse the day on which he had accepted this voluntary imprisonment ; he would angrily call God to account for the blows which were falling upon him ; and then, returning to his pious trust, he would clasp his hands and pray to Him with tears to spare the life of Genevieve.

Towards the morning of the third day, there seemed a hope that his prayer had been heard. The fever abated, and the patient recovered all her clearness of mind ; but this change did not make her share in the happiness or in the hopes of Matthew.

" Do not think that this is recovery, dear husband," said she, in a voice that could scarcely be heard, and pausing

at each sentence ; “ the disease is going, but life will go with it. That evening you crossed the channel, when I heard the child’s scream from the sea, I thought it was all over with both of you, and then—I cannot say what happened, but it seemed to me that something within me—the great spring of life broke ! So now I feel that all is ended !”

Ropars opposed her fears by repeating that the doctor had now hopes again, and that all would be well. The sick woman, whose eyes were closed, half opened them with difficulty, and looked at him with an expression full of affection.

“ We are in God’s hands, Matthew,” said she ; “ He knows whether I am not willing to remain with you. But indeed, my poor husband, you must not hope too much. The wisest way is to think the worst.”

“ The wisest way,” interrupted the seaman, “ is to keep quiet, and to have trust. I too think according to my feelings. This very night I had a weight like lead upon my heart ; now it is light again, and I can breathe freely. In God’s name, let your health come back, and try and wish to live, if it is only for my sake !”

Genevieve made an effort to bring her cold damp hand to that of Ropars.

“ You are very good, Matthew,” said she, letting fall two tears, the last which could be drawn from those eyes drained dry with weeping. “ Ah ! my greatest grief now is that I have not always thought of this, nor shown myself grateful enough. Oh ! how much better we should be to those we love, if we remembered that we must one day leave them ! Ever since I recovered my senses, this thought has haunted me ; I feel all my faults, and the remorse they bring. Oh ! tell me, Matthew, I entreat you, do you forgive me now for not having always been what I should have been ?”

“ Do not talk so, Genevieve,” interrupted the seaman, much

moved ; "you know well I could not have asked God for a better wife ; since I have had you, I have wanted nothing—and I owe you many thanks."

"No, no," resumed the sick woman, rousing herself ; "many, many times have I been wanting in courage and in patience ; not with you alone, but with Francine, with Jeanette—Jeanette ! darling of my heart, who had so few years to live ! And to think, Matthew, how often I have made her cry—she who is now in her grave ! Ah ! it is the tears of the dead which weigh heaviest of all. And the other people that I have offended—and God, against whom I have sinned ! Shall I not, then, seek forgiveness ?"

Then, as if this thought had awakened a kind of terror in her, she raised herself and added—

"Ah ! it is in vain. Matthew, Matthew, I would see a priest !"

"How can we bring him here ?" said the seaman sorrowfully ; "have you forgotten that the island is in quarantine ?"

"What ! not able even to procure our soul's salvation ?" resumed Genevieve, clasping her hands. "Oh ! am I then condemned to die without being reconciled to God ? What am I to do ? The worst sinner may confess his faults and ask absolution. O my God ! must I alone be left without help ?"

She stopped suddenly, and raised her two hands to her forehead.

"Ah ! now I remember," resumed she, "have you not told me that in your ships, when there was no priest in the hour of death, any Christian man might supply his place ?—that God had regard to the intention ?"

"I did tell you so," replied Ropars ; "and all the sailors in the country will say the same, on the word of their own clergyman."

"Then," resumed the dying woman, turning her fevered

eye towards the sailor, “come and help me. Listen, I will confess myself to you !”

She raised herself on her elbow, and made the sign of the cross. Matthew seemed startled, but could not make any objection. He belonged, as we have said, to that race now almost extinct even in Brittany, among whom the strong and simple faith of another age still survives. Many times in a shipwreck have such as he been seen, after exhausting every means of saving themselves, kneeling down to wait for death, and confessing themselves to one another, like the old knights before battle. He was, therefore, more disturbed than surprised at Genevieve’s request ; and when he heard her murmur the prayer which precedes the confession of sins, he too uncovered his head and crossed himself, in order to fulfil the holy office necessity had intrusted to him.

It was a mournful and touching scene. The first glimmering rays of morning threw an uncertain light upon the bed ; Genevieve’s dishevelled head was bent towards the gray head of Matthew ; the low whisper of that last holy confidence was heard proceeding—often interrupted by the exhaustion of the dying woman, or by the sailor’s entreaties that she would shorten it—and as often resumed, with the strong persistence of those who, with severely self-judging consciences, think they can never accuse themselves enough.

At last, when she had finished, Ropars took down the ivory crucifix from the head of the bed, put it to the lips of Genevieve, and laying his hand upon her forehead he said with mournful earnestness—

“ May God pardon you, as I do as well as I am able ; and if it is not His will that you should live for my happiness, may He find a place for you with Him in paradise.”

An expression of unspeakable calm came over the face of the dying woman.

"Thank you," murmured she, "your absolution will prevail before the Holy Trinity, Matthew : now, I am in peace."

A sunbeam which was shining through the window curtains, reached her bed ; she turned towards it.

"The day is come," continued she ; "I never hoped to see it again. God has given me a respite. He has consented to grant me the last happiness which I wished for on earth. You will not refuse it me either, my Matthew."

"Speak, Genevieve," said the seaman ; "I will do all that a man can do."

She took his hand and looked at him.

"Did you not tell me that our cousin could see, and understand your signals ?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then, as you love me, Matthew, I beg you to give him notice directly, to bring Francine out upon his battery ; when she is there, you must take me in your arms, and carry me as far as the great rock, and, if God permits, I shall reach it with life enough to see my child, and take her to my heart once more."

"It shall be as you wish, Genevieve," said the seaman, who, overcome by the dying woman's forebodings, had given up hope, and had no longer the power to refuse her anything.

"Quick, then, very quick !" stammered she, "for I feel that God is calling me."

The quarter-master rushed out, as if he feared he should not be in time ; he came back almost immediately, and said that Francine was on the battery of the powder-magazine with Dorot. The dying woman uttered a feeble cry of joy, and stretched out her hands to her husband. He wrapped her in his winter cloak, and carried her gently in his arms up to the battery-parapet.

"Where is she ?" asked the sick woman, whose eyes were

dazzled by the day-light, as she tried in vain to see ; "I distinguish nothing, Matthew—where is the child ? Show me my child ! "

"Look down there," replied the seaman ; "do you see the great rock ?"

"Yes."

"And can you follow the ripple of the sea along the bar ?"

"Yes, yes !"

"And down there still further, over the reefs, do you distinguish the battery walls ?"

"Down there ? No ! it is all a mist—I see nothing ! Oh, if it were too late ! if I had her under my eyes, and yet could not see her more ! O my God, my God ! only once, once more, let me see my child ! "

These words, or rather exclamations of maternal love, were so woful, that Ropars could not conceal his tears. He placed the dying woman upon the parapet, and knelt by her to support her.

"Courage, Genevieve," stammered he ; "look well on this side—between the sky and the sea."

"I am looking," said the dying woman, who seemed to gather all her remaining life together into this effort. "Lift up my head, Matthew. Shade the sun from me"—

She interrupted herself by a stifled exclamation.

"Ah, there she is ! there she is ! She sees me ! she holds out her arms ! Francine ! my child ! "

She bent forward with such a sudden impulse, that but for Ropars she would have fallen over the rocks which went down to the sea. A passing ray of life lit up her features ; she sent her kisses to her child, speaking to her as if she could hear her ; she raised her clasped hands to heaven, with rapid and broken prayers ; she smiled and wept at once. At last, the strength for such utterance of her feelings failed her, and

her head fell back upon the quarter-master's shoulder, who, frightened, took her again in his arms to carry her back to the house ; but she made a sign to him, that she wished to stay in the open air. He placed her on the bench where the family were wont to meet every evening, in front of the sea, now lighted by the rising sun.

After a long fainting fit, she again opened her eyes and asked for her daughter. Matthew looked towards the powder-magazine, and told her Dorot had taken her away. She bowed her head sadly, but in resignation.

"He has done right," said she in a weaker tone ; "I feel, besides, that my sight is confused—I can no longer distinguish, and I have still something more to say to you. Come near, Matthew—nearer, my voice is going ; give me your hand, I must be sure you hear me."

Ropars knelt down on the sand, with one of his hands in those of the dying woman, and with the other passed round her to support her.

"You will be left alone," continued she ; "you might perhaps bear this elsewhere ; but here, in the middle of the sea, it is not a life for a man, nor a Christian. You are used to have some one to keep you company, to love you. When I am no more, another must fill my place."

"Never !" interrupted Ropars.

She motioned him with her hand to be silent.

"Hush," said she gently ; "it is right you shold think so as long as I am with you, but, when they have laid me in my coffin, you will feel your need. Do not think I reproach you for it, my poor husband—I would not carry away your happiness with me in my winding-sheet. No, no ! wherever I am, I shall always wish to be sure that you are in want of nothing."

"Enough, Genevieve!" murmured the seaman, his voice broken by emotion.

"Let me finish," resumed she; "I have still something to ask you. When you take the crape from your arm, Matthew, promise me to think of the darling creature who is child to us both, and who will remain with you, as a remembrance of me. Look for a wife who will supply my place to her."

"What are you asking me, and whom could I give her for a mother after you?" cried Ropars.

"Some one who will not grudge my having been chosen first," replied Genevieve; "an honest heart willing to take kindly to an orphan, to talk to her of me, to teach her to love God, and to obey you. If you promise me she shall be this, Matthew—if you promise it on your honour, and on your hope of salvation, I shall sleep in peace, and blessing you."

Ropars promised through his sobs; and this was the last effort of the dying woman. After thanking him by a pressure of his hand, she sank back into the seaman's arms. It seemed as if by strength of will, she had stayed the approach of death till she had thus opened her heart for the last time; hardly had she done, when the death-struggle began. She was carried back to her bed, where she died towards the close of day. Her last words were a prayer, in which the names of her husband and child were heard.

The next day, the grave where the remains of Jeannette already rested was opened again to receive her; for during the last month death had cut down so many, that the rocky isle lacked space for his dismal harvest. The ordnance-keeper, who had been apprised of what had happened by the signals agreed upon, brought Francine to the edge of his rock, and the child on her knees prayed for her mother, while the burial service was proceeding on the other side of the water.

This was the last death. Like those expiatory victims, who, by sacrificing themselves, appeased the wrath of the gods, Genevieve, when descending into the tomb, seemed to close it behind her. A fortnight afterwards, the yellow flag no longer floated from the lazaretto flagstaff; and the recovered quarantiners departed in the frigate's barge, leaving on the deserted isle only a man with whitened hair, and a child dressed in mourning.

## THE KOURIGAN.

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LE SILLON—the ridge—is the name given to that long-extended narrow elevation which separates the portion of land between the mouths of the Loire and Vilaine from the remainder of Brittany. The road from Nantes to Vannes runs along the summit of this natural rampart. To the right lies the French Brittany, which always gives me the idea of a well-worn coin, so uniform is the character of its landscape scenery, totally devoid as it is of one prominent feature. On the other side, stretches out a different view, which, for peculiarity of outline and well-defined lineament—or, to carry out our former simile, having better maintained the freshness of its impress—is the most striking country to be seen at the present day. Nor is the contrast here confined to inanimate nature—the inhabitants being as diverse as the land of their birth. To the right, we meet a small short race, with dark hair and colourless faces, whose expression chiefly betokens listless apathy; while to the left, we behold tall, graceful forms, blooming complexions, animated countenances. On the right a Celtic, on the left a German race.

So far back as the fifteenth century a party of Saxon navi-

gators settled on these shores. They have increased much in number since then ; but have not mingled with the natives of the surrounding country, so that their descendants at the present time form almost exclusively the community which inhabits the territory known by the name of La Bruyère. These people seem to have inherited the roving disposition of their ancestors. After having gathered in their summer harvest, they enter their *futreaux*—large boats of a peculiar shape—which they freight with turf, and convey to Nantes, Rochelle, Bordeaux, &c. Or they lade their mules with salt, and carrying it to the western provinces, receive in exchange sugar, coffee, and other articles which minister to the necessities or the luxuries of life, and which are either disposed of during the journey back, or else deposited in their homes.

To one of these caravans I joined myself, in order to accomplish a long-cherished plan of becoming acquainted with this part of the coast of Brittany. I proceeded along the Sillon seated upon one of twelve mules which were under the guidance of Pierre Louis, commonly called “the grenadier ;” a well-known salt-dealer, who was now on his homeward journey from Rochelle to the small seaport of Saillé. Pierre Louis was a tall, commanding-looking fellow, with a frank expression, an independent bearing, and a cheerful heart—who always let his eyes rest upon the sunbeams which fell across his path, thankfully received and enjoyed each day as many blessings as the day might bring, patiently bore the misfortunes that he could not avoid, and rested peacefully at night, without any anxiety for the wants of the morrow.

Of the twelve mules which formed the cavalcade, only two belonged to himself; the remaining number, as well as the loads of salt with which he had set out six weeks before, were the property of neighbours, with whom he had to make up accounts. His journey this time was unfortunate—chiefly

to himself. One of his beasts died—the other fell lame, so that he was obliged to sell it, to use his own expression, “for less than the worth of its hide and its hoofs.”

He was returning home, if not a ruined man, at least not far from it; but he did not allow himself to become a prey to despondency. Cheerfully he walked along by the side of the cavalcade, dressed in his waggoner’s smock—always fresh and clean—white linen leggins, which came above the knee, a broad-brimmed hat, placed sideways on his head, his whip fastened across his back—while his fingers were busily employed in paring willow-twigs, and converting them into all sorts of ingenious devices, which were presented to the children whom he met upon the road.

But whatever else Pierre Louis was about, he was generally heard whistling, whether he walked or stood still—in fact, at all times and at every employment, except when taking his food, or when engaged in prayer. With true musical talent, he would whistle the most difficult tunes, national melodies, bacchanalian and political songs, sacred music, opera airs—every style, in short. But what I liked best to hear were his voluntaries, in which, for hours together, he delighted to give full play to his genius, without ever growing weary.

When he did happen to be silent, it seemed to me as if all sounds were hushed, as though even the mule-bells had ceased their tinkling—something was wanting; I felt uncomfortable and dissatisfied. But this only happened when anything peculiarly painful weighed upon his mind, which was of rare occurrence. And even at such times, his melodious notes would only cease for fifteen minutes or so, when one or other of the animals, unable to proceed from weariness, probably recalled to his mind his recent losses.

During such pauses, I was wont to converse with his wife, who, as is the custom of these people, accompanied her hus-

band on his journey. This was the first that they had undertaken together, not having been very long married. She had weaned her infant shortly before setting out, and was obliged to leave it behind; and now her whole thoughts seemed to centre in her home, in the direction of which she gazed so eagerly, that one would have imagined that her dark and penetrating eyes expected every moment to discover the figure of her child in the farthest point of the horizon before us. Jeanne was a very beautiful creature—it would be hard indeed to find a handsomer pair than she and Pierre Louis. And yet her whole deportment betokened something more intellectual, more retiring, more noble than his; and the look of intense anxiety to be with her child heightened the interest of her appearance, by throwing over the usually beaming expression which lighted up her regular features a shade of dignified sadness, almost of pain.

One day, Pierre Louis having indulged for a while in a gloomy fit of silence, seemed suddenly to be aroused from it by something terrifying; then, taking a few rapid strides in advance of us, he glanced fearfully round him, and began to whistle. On our reaching him, he drew my attention to two windmills, the sails of which were going briskly round, while several mills in the neighbourhood seemed, like ourselves, to be forsaken by every breath of wind. I endeavoured, in various ways, both by the formation of the ground and their own position, to explain this monopoly of the wind, but it so happened that I could discover no cause by which to account for it. Consequently I had little to urge in reply when "the grenadier" briefly explained the matter as being an unearthly power conferred by the Virgin, which could only be interrupted by the influence of the "black Kourigan."\*

\* The Kourigan of Brittany is evidently the same demoniacal being who is called in Ireland "Cluricane," an account of whom is given in Grimm's *Irish Fairy Tales*, and also in *Sketches of Ireland*, published at Berlin in 1851.

From the further information that he gave me respecting this mysterious being—to whom he also applied the epithet of the “black dwarf,” and whom Jeanne denominated “the elder brother of death”—I learned that his chief pleasure consists in acquainting mortals, by his appearance, of some impending calamity, without at the same time showing them any means of averting it. Jeanne related to me, in an under tone, how she had seen the Kourigan when they were setting out on their journey; and how, after sneaking at the other side of the hedge, quite close to them, for a long time, he had sprung across the road and disappeared, with a strange cry, which sounded first like a scornful laugh, but died away in a piteous wail. “It is no wonder, then,” she added, “that our journey has been so unfortunate; but Pierre Louis”—she suddenly cut short her sentence, and trembled, as he turned round quickly and cast a melancholy glance at her. However, he soon began to whistle, and then Jeanne looked again cheerfully into the far distance.

We turned off the Sillon opposite Savenai, entering *la grande Bruyère*—the great moor—where Pierre had some business to transact with a relation of his wife, who not only filled the office of godfather to her, but had taken entire charge of her from the death of her parents, which occurred when she was very young.

The country through which we passed soon assumed the appearance of parched sand; but there rose here and there, from out of the bleak desert plain, little hillocks clothed with the richest verdure, that looked like baskets of flowers, or like emerald isles, though without the surrounding water. They were for the most part connected with each other by an irregular natural causeway. Shaded by lofty elm-trees, and partly hidden by shrubs and weeds, peeped out little cottages, their roofs so covered with moss and grass, house-leek, and other

herbs, both variegated and of a brilliant green, that one could scarcely conceive them to be the workmanship and the dwelling of man. Flocks of sheep, with long purplish wool, pastured on the border of these oases; and our approach startled a number of plovers or lapwings which flew rapidly round their island, uttering a strange wild cry, as though sounding an alarm to the inhabitants. The path led us along the verge of the largest of these oases—scarcely had we passed it, when the great moor, properly so called, spread out before our view. There it lay, a vast undulating plain, completely bare, its red soil interspersed here and there with tufts of sickly stunted reeds, and emitting an offensive exhalation, which rested midway in the air, like red waves which had been expelled from the bosom of the earth to add to the uniform colour of the scene above; not a breath of air was to be felt on the heights, nor a shadow to be seen in the valleys. The ground, which was like red ashes, admitted of no firm footing; and occasionally a pond of dark stagnant water was to be seen, without even a blade of grass upon its margin.

From time to time, we passed people cutting turf; their long hair falling over their shoulders, and their forms smeared and darkened with the dull red dust and smoke, proclaimed them to be the true natives of this dismal country. Our party afforded a lively contrast to the scene around; the heads of the mules being decked with various colours, and armed with green boughs to protect them from flies: on the finest of these animals was seated the lovely Jeanne; while walking and whistling vigorously behind her was to be seen the handsome form of “the grenadier,” having an accompaniment to his music in the merry tinkling of the mule-bells. I drew Jeanne’s attention to what had struck me so forcibly, asking if our little cavalcade did not resemble a bright gladdening sunbeam on a gloomy day. She looked at me thoughtfully,

almost dreamily, for a moment, and shook her beautiful head. Presently she replied—

“To be sure, the vast moor cannot have the charms for you that it has for those who once lived happily in it. But there are many women who possess true worth and excellence, though quite devoid of beauty; and this bleak moor maintains eight Christian congregations.”

I inquired how long she had lived here.

“Fourteen years,” she replied; “and I may truly say that they were none of the saddest years of my life. My little hood and red serge frock covered a form untouched by the finger of sorrow. Ah, yes! people may say as they like, but youth is surely the fairest of all God’s gifts!”

The look and tone which accompanied these words induced me to inquire if she would fain recall her former condition of life.

“I would recall nothing, sir; but *never* can I forget the past,” she replied, in an agitated voice, at the same time giving me a speaking, hasty look. Then she added, in her usual blithe tone—

“If you could but know how happy I used to be when driving through the moor with poor Gratien, to lift the first cut of turf.”

“Gratien was your guardian’s son, I suppose?”

“He was a poor deserted child, whom my guardian, or rather his sister, had, in compassion, rescued from the hospital in Savenai. We grew up together like brother and sister. Though as ugly a boy as could well be found, yet a more amiable kind-hearted creature never lived upon the earth. Alas! his mind has of late become deranged, and he remains from home for weeks at a time, wandering about no one knows where. Many people think—enough, I have not seen him since my marriage.”

She remained silent and thoughtful for a moment, then went on, in her simple, intelligent manner, to draw a lively picture of her former life and occupations ; at the same time, though quite unconsciously, allowing me to have a glimpse into the state of her feelings at that period. Her guardian, she told me, was in the habit of cutting a very large quantity of turf annually, and conveying it in his own boat across the canal of Méans to the Loire. A long farewell was bid to home, as, freighted wth her dusky cargo, the heavy-laden boat, with her single sail hoisted, pushed off from the shore, to which she was not to return for several months. Michael the guardian, Jeanne, and Gratien, composed the entire crew ; and as this aquatic turf-stack struggled against the current of the Loire, the voyage was always fraught with toil, oftentimes with danger.

The turf was sold, as they glided on, wherever purchasers were to be found, or else bartered for other goods and necessary provisions. At night the boat was anchored near the shore ; but the small cabin in the stern, or the deck when weather permitted, was Jeanne's home during the entire voyage. She left the boat only when the press of work required her attendance in some of the larger towns.

During the depth of winter, they were sometimes ice-bound for several weeks together ; after which, when the melted ice rendered the inundations so great as to prevent their discerning where the navigable water terminated, they had often an anxious, dreary time, and many moments of solemn thought. But when the bright smile of spring once more gladdened the earth, when the beams of the sun grew daily warmer and more invigorating, and soft silvery clouds passed gently over the blue sky ; when the warbling of birds could be heard distinctly from amidst the shrubs on shore, and the spring flowers on the river-bank again opened their bright eyes, then

all past distress was quickly forgotten. Michael would hoist the sail, and Gratien cast his net, while Jeanne occupied herself pleasantly, as she sat on deck, in musing, singing, and spinning.

What Jeanne related was indeed devoid of incident, and therefore, some might deem, of interest. But, to my mind, it yielded a very vivid description of the quiet, cheerful nature of this family, unclouded by vain or evil propensities, as they occupied themselves busily in a simple, honest, useful, and active calling. Four years of Jeanne's happy girlhood had thus glided by, when, as they were embarking at Méans, she first met her present husband, who, contrary to the custom of the people in Saillé, and for the sake of her beautiful eyes, as he said, determined to marry one beyond the circle of his own community. Jeanne laughed and sighed alternately as she brought her little history to a conclusion. This excitement of manner might, however, betoken nothing more than I could previously have guessed, and now inferred, from a single expression which escaped her lips, that his giddy, thoughtless, and rather proud nature often caused her a pang of sorrow, especially as he had already run through the greatest part of his own fortune and of her dowry.

Our conversation was suddenly cut short by the appearing of Michael Maron himself. Jeanne spied him at a great distance, as he was busily engaged, with his sister, in cutting turf; and, shouting with joy, she urged her mule towards them at a quick trot. The entire cavalcade followed; and Pierre Louis and I, who were on foot, had to mend our pace considerably, that we might arrive in time to see the welcome. The meeting on Jeanne's part exhibited an almost impetuous though pathetic tenderness, while the manner of the old moor-peasant and his sister—or Bruyérons, as the people term themselves—was marked by the most frigid calmness, such

as was, in former ages, natural to the natives of their original mother-country, and especially amongst the aristocracy. This manner arose partly from a sort of characteristic dulness, and partly from a certain refinement of feeling, and of dignity, which shrank from allowing their deeper and more tender emotions to be externally manifested. As a stranger, I was greeted with more courtesy, and invited to partake of the hospitality which their house afforded.

We soon set forth again upon our way, as night was quickly closing in, and we had still a good half-hour's ride before us. The two women struck into a beaten path, whilst we proceeded with the remainder of the mules along the more circuitous highroad. I soon found myself far behind my companions ; but had not remained so long when the thought struck me, that the beaten track must surely afford some more interesting object than the monotonous view which lay before me ; and, besides, I preferred conversing with Jeanne and her friend, to staying with the men, whose talk was almost unintelligible to me, and who, so far as I could understand, had—in their peculiar *patois*—entered into a tedious conversation on business. So I determined to ride quietly across to the narrow path, where, through the fading twilight, I could still distinguish the two figures, whom I hoped soon to overtake. But lo ! before I was at all aware, I was suddenly immersed in one of the morasses of this treacherous soil. I had lost sight of every object around ; and, owing to the increasing darkness, I was quite unable to extricate myself from my uncomfortable position. All attempts to make my voice heard were unavailing ; it seemed as if the atmosphere were too heavy to transmit any sound, and I felt that the shouts which I uttered caused a painful straining of the muscles of my chest and throat. The only effort I could make, which appeared practicable with my already wearied beast, was to

follow a narrow rut or hollow, between two of the long-extended mountainous undulations, which I supposed would finally conduct us to some human habitation.

The air, meanwhile, had become more and more sultry and oppressive ; and I observed a constantly-increasing smoke, which at last rendered it painful to me to open my eyes. But what distressed me more was, that the mule showed each moment less inclination to proceed. Suddenly he sprang, first to one side, then to the other, from which he as suddenly rebounded, as if he had seen some object of danger, or some source of pain invisible to me. Then he would remain for a moment quite rigid, trembling and snorting, and at last gallop frantically round and round in a narrow circle, neighing and whining all the while ; again he would rear, kick, or spring up all fours in the air, without any regard to spur or rein. It was only when darkness had completely set in, that I discovered the cause of this frenzy, and observed that the poor animal's feet sank at every step through the thin layer, which I had mistaken for gray sand, but which was in reality ashes, and plunged into a stratum of glowing turf, which emitted the dense smoke that now threatened to suffocate me, and out of which, in his anguish and alarm, the hoofs of the animal scattered burning sparks around.

My situation had become extremely critical, when the welcome voices of my two guides reached my ears from the road, which passed quite close to where I was ; they had heard me encouraging the poor beast, and they soon appeared at the summit of the rising ground. Calling aloud, they directed me to a stagnant pool which lay about twenty paces before me. With the help of his master's stimulating cry, I succeeded in bringing the mule to the margin of the pool, where he made a firm stand ; nor could my utmost endeavours induce him to proceed a step farther, or conquer his dread of coming into

contact with the dark and loathsome water. At length, with the assistance of his companion's long pole, Pierre Louis made a spring, swung himself from the height where he stood, over the burning soil, and lighted, with the dexterity of an equestrian performer, on the back of the animal, behind me ; then taking a firm hold of me, he seized the reins, and both with spur and voice urged the poor animal to take one good leap into the middle of the pool ; and after slowly fording it, as though his scorched hoofs enjoyed the coolness of the water, he at length reached the opposite bank.

On dismounting, I heartily thanked the grenadier for having rescued me from such imminent danger, when he rather drily observed : " He who is not acquainted with the paths and burning soil of the Bruyère, should carefully keep by those who are familiar with it, or perhaps trust to the instinct of his horse, which, in such cases, is often better able to find the way than its rider, though he should happen to be a scholar. Poor Belotte !" he added, as he stroked the reeking side of the trembling animal, " you will be lame to the end of your days ; and were I not already a ruined man, your price would also have to come out of my pocket."

I set his mind at rest on the latter score ; and as he soon resumed his usual light-hearted manner, we pursued our way, though now on foot, with as much good humour and friendliness as before. Our conversation naturally dwelt on the subject of the moor-fires, and other peculiarities of this part of the country. I was struck by the appearance of small streaks of light darting up, here and there, all over the neighbourhood ; but old Maron told me that he had once seen a conflagration of this kind so extensive as to threaten to overspread the entire moor, and which was only extinguished by the most strenuous exertions of the moor-sprites, after having lasted for several days, during which time the alarum-bell rang incess-

santly, and signals of distress were constantly given ; but that since then the fires had been limited to certain portions of the soil.

As we walked along, Pierre Louis chanced to plant his leaping-pole too deeply in the ground, and had extreme difficulty in drawing it out again. He declared that had he allowed it to remain there, it would have disappeared entirely before morning, the moor having an all-absorbing faculty. The peasant remarked that the ground is constantly rising ; and that to what depth soever they cut the turf, the surface still remains at its former height. On my inquiring the cause of this strange phenomenon, he said : " Is it possible that this is still unknown to you, sir ? Originally the moor was composed, so to speak, of two stories—one on the level ground, and one beneath it. At that time it was the joint property of the sons of Japhet and of the Kourigans ; and the two parties took it by turns to live in the cellar or on the ground-floor. But it so happened, that the sons of Japhet took advantage of their position, once upon a time, when dwelling above, and built up the cellar, in order that their neighbours might not again change places with them—so the Kourigans have remained below ever since ; and when they try to force a passage into the upper territory, the moor rises along with them. It is they who draw everything down that is stuck into the moor ; and the fires also are their work. There remains but one of these beings above ground, who happened to be out at the time, and returned too late to gain admission to his companions. We call him the little collier ; and he has wandered about amongst men ever since, announcing and procuring to them all kinds of misfortune."

We arrived very late and weary at Maron's residence, and soon retired to rest. The next morning we set out again before dawn, and drove through the moor without any further

adventure. Pierre Louis was as light-hearted, and whistled as merrily as ever ; Jeanne, on the contrary, looked very sad and desponding. On my taking her husband aside to inquire the cause of her low spirits, he replied : " Poor Jeanne saw the little collier last evening—the black Kourigan that we were telling you about—and since then, his dark shadow seems to have rested upon her heart. One should not mind these things, but should try to overcome such weak terrors ; and yet I would give a great deal that she had not seen him."

We soon left the great moor behind, our course leading through scenery completely different, and still not less remarkable. At first we passed innumerable meadows, that were bounded on the left by stately poplars and alder-trees, through the foliage of which glittered white sails and streaming pendants, which bespoke our vicinity to the Loire. We next passed waving corn fields on the plains of St. Nazaire. Then the sandy wastes of Escoublac. Here the fine snow-white sand formed an endless number of hills and valleys, and was often piled into the most fantastic shapes, or whirled up into lofty columns by the ever-shifting storm. On the lower ground there occasionally appeared lakes of brackish water, in which the blue sky and the fleeting clouds were clearly mirrored ; while, on closer observation, the fossil shells of a limestone deposit were to be seen upon their banks. The only vegetation here was a species of large thistle, and solitary clumps of pale-green rushes. There was no cultivation, nor a single human habitation. No sound of life was to be heard except the cry of a kind of small sea-gull, which mounted up in swarms, now in one place, now in another, as if driven to and fro by the tempest each time that they tried to settle down. It was long before we got a glimpse of the sea, but we heard the sound of its rolling waves, as they broke upon

the shore, sometimes distinctly, then again in distant murmurs, according as our road neared or receded from the yet unseen coast. Upon the highest of these hills arose a solitary tree, the only one this desert shore produces. It marks the spot where the church and churchyard of the ancient town of Escoublac once stood. The bones of those who have been laid here—to *rest*, as was no doubt supposed—are now strewn over the entire declivity of the hill, from which they are constantly drifted about by the restless fury of the tempest. Pierre Louis pointed out to me the spot where he remembers to have seen, in his childhood, the top of the steeple peeping from above the sand.

In a little valley surrounded by several of these drifted hills, and so sheltered that some miserable plants were actually trying to exist there, we proposed to rest for a while. Jeanne was a short way before us; she seemed to be anxiously awaiting our approach as she sat musing on a stone, which appeared to have been placed there for the convenience of travellers by some unknown benefactor, and had evidently been carried from a great distance, as it was the only one to be seen far and wide. This stone, of which one side was rough-hewn, may probably be the only fragment now visible, of the town which lies buried in the sand. When we had arrived at this resting-place, and were dismounting, I made an attempt to cheer up Jeanne by some passing joke; but she suddenly interrupted me, as she sprang up, and, pointing to a spot near her, cried out, in a terrified voice—"Look there—look, the Kourigan!" We eagerly turned to that part of the ground on which her gaze was riveted, and observed that the fine sand had been carefully smoothed, and pressed firmly down, while on this flat surface were traced letters, and somewhat magic-looking characters. "Heaven protect us!" exclaimed Pierre Louis; "it is your name, Jeanne!" "So it is, to be

sure!"—I observed, on seeing that Jeanne trembled from head to foot, and leaned on her husband, as she buried her face on his shoulder; "but what is there so terrifying in that, and what has it to do with your tiresome Kourigan? It merely proves that more people than we have discovered that Jeanne is not only the best, but also the handsomest woman to be seen between Vannes and Nantes—that is, if *our* Jeanne is the fair one designated, and not any other of the ten thousand Jeannes whom this country may contain."

Pierre Louis was evidently much disquieted, but he tried by some rather unseasonable jests, to calm his own and his wife's terrors, or to delude her with respect to the strange subject of their fear. While, without further delay, we set off on our journey, Jeanne listened to his remarks with a silent shake of the head, but her look told of deep and bitter anguish. When we had gone a little farther, I perceived more marks in the sand, at some distance. These were footprints which could not have been made by any known animal, and near them was a circle formed by some curious and small implement, such as a claw or a tiny finger. This new discovery seemed to remove from Pierre Louis' mind every remaining doubt of these strange hieroglyphics having been traced by supernatural agency, and, casting a melancholy look at Jeanne, he urged on his mule to its utmost speed. The poor woman was already so overcome by terror and sad foreboding, that this fresh confirmation of her fears merely wrung from her a heart-rending sigh, accompanied by the words—"I knew it too well!" The distracted manner of my fellow-travellers plainly evincing that any attempt at a rational investigation, or playful treatment of the subject, would be out of place, I also rode on in silence.

The proneness to superstition in the minds of this race, which even exceeds that manifested by the other inhabi-

tants of Brittany, was not unknown to me. I had already heard of the "treacherous monk," who sits upon a stone at the roadside, near his heap of gold, and nightly invites the passer-by to play with him—a game involving not only the loss of the mule and its load, but also of the life and soul of its owner. I had heard of the "phantom mule," which quietly allows the way-worn midnight traveller to mount him, and then disappears with him for ever; of the "fog-bell" that is heard on stormy nights, and whose tinkle the wanderer mistakes for that of an approaching mule, till it lures him on to the raging sea, or to some other equally inevitable destruction.

I had been musing on these strange popular superstitions, which are, for the most part, the remains of ancient heathen fables, still subsisting in this nominally Christian, and, some say, highly civilized and enlightened age!—and I was so absorbed in my reverie, as not to observe that we had quite left the sandy country, and were now passing by rich corn fields, and approaching villages and country-seats that peeped from behind their well-stocked orchards. The song of the reapers, heard on all sides, and becoming louder and more distinct as we proceeded, at length recalled my wandering thoughts. They sang, in rather a monotonous tune, an address, chiefly extempore, to their oxen, which were drawing home the heavy-laden corn waggons, apparently much enjoying this stimulus to their labours.\* Where there was a pause

\* Any attempt at a translation of such songs, must fail to convey an adequate idea of their simple beauty; so that we believe we shall afford more pleasure to our readers, by giving a specimen of them in their original purity:—

" Ilé mon rougeaud !

Mon noireaud !

Allons ferme a l'housteau,

Vous aurez du rnouveau.

L' bón Dieu aime les Chrétiens !

L' blé a grainé ben ;

in the song, or when it ended, they immediately relaxed their exertions, and were sometimes inclined to stand still altogether ; but when the tune was raised again, they also raised their heads, and went vigorously forward with their precious burden.

Pierre Louis had by this time thrown off the unwonted pressure of sadness which had oppressed him, and occasionally exchanged friendly or bantering words with one and another as they passed. He soon began to meet acquaintances, and I surmised that we were not far from his home. Jeanne seemed like one in a trance as she rode along, her straining gaze ever directed forwards, and regardless of all that was passing around. The entire concentration of her thoughts on one subject, was plainly evinced as her husband took hold of her bridle, and stopped her mule, saying—

“ Do you see nothing, Jeanne ? ”

She started back, and asked, in a wild and terrified voice—

“ What is it, Pierre Louis ? You have frightened me ! ”

“ Oh ! you are dreaming ! ” he playfully replied. “ What have you been looking at, far away, that you have not seen our church-steeple peeping up from behind the wood ? ”

“ Our steeple ! ” she exclaimed, deeply agitated, and clasping her hands for an instant, then adding—“ And our child—our poor child, I have sought him, but can find him nowhere ! ”

A flood of tears relieved her sorrow-stricken heart ; and she again urged forward her mule, while Pierre Louis tenderly tried to soothe her, assuring her that she would now soon be able to embrace her child.

Some more intimate friends—from whom Pierre Louis in-

“ Mes mignons c'est vot' gain !  
Les gens aurons du pain,  
Nos femmes vont ben chanter,  
Et les enfans serons gais !  
Hé mon rougesaud,” &c.

quired, as we passed, how all were in Saillé ? what news from thence ? and if they had seen little Pierre lately ?—replied in general terms, and, I thought, in rather an embarrassed manner. This only made Jeanne ride on with increased speed.

At length we reached the first house in the place. An old woman, who was spinning at her door, ran up to Jeanne, exclaiming—

“ Ah, poor soul ! you have just come in time.”

“ In time ! for what ?”

“ Do you not know yet ?” asked the good woman, quite perplexed.

“ What ?—what ?—what do I not know ?” groaned poor Jeanne.

“ Oh ! your little one !”

“ My little Pierre !”

She did not wait for the answer, but rushed frantically along the street toward her home.

We found the child in a violent attack of scarlet fever, which was then raging, in one of its most malignant forms, over the whole of Guérande. The neighbours came crowding in ; amongst them many mothers, whose own children had been snatched away by the disease ; and tales of wo, well-meant but ignorant and exaggerated views of the child’s illness, miserable attempts at consolation, and suggestions of absurd or hazardous remedies, were poured in from all sides upon the poor mother. I was astonished at her self-command. After the first shock had subsided, it seemed as if the certainty of the danger—a presentiment of which had hitherto so overwhelmed her—joined to the urgent call for the exercise of her maternal love and skill, had suddenly restored all the intelligence and energy of her natural character. She suppressed her sobs, dried her eyes, and with the greatest deci-

sion, presence of mind, and gentleness, entered upon all her rights and duties as sick-nurse, mother, and housewife. Pierre Louis, on the contrary, after having given vent to a boisterous expression of passionate grief, threw himself, quite exhausted, into a corner, groaning and lamenting, and even cursing his journey. The neighbours disappeared one after another; they felt that none could share the mother's place beside her infant's cradle.

After some time, the father jumped up, impatient of the unwonted restraint laid upon him by serious anxiety and imminent danger. He went over to the cradle, and soon discovered what he wanted—some ground or pretext for casting off this unusual and inconvenient burden. The flush of fever in the child's face, was to him a sure sign of returning health.

" You shall see, Jeanne," he whispered, " that this will not matter; he is not even pale, the little cherub! The talk and exaggerated stories of the women quite overcame me at first; but you'll find, my poor darling, that it will not come to anything more serious."

He was even irritable when Jeanne quietly replied, clasping her hands—

" God grant it, Pierre! the child's life is in His hand."

After having, in a noisy and agitated manner, performed all sorts of foolish, well-intended offices, to which she paid no attention—kneeling the while in silent prayer beside the cradle—Pierre went out in a perfectly tranquil and almost lively mood, to deliver up the mules to their owners, and look after his other affairs. I followed him, promising Jeanne that I would return shortly to inquire about the child. I soon procured accommodation for myself with a certain Mr. Content—such was the *soubriquet* by which he was known all over the country, and which he well deserved by his inex-

haustible store of self-satisfaction, which was so great as to make him, in general, almost as well pleased with other people and things as with himself.

My first walk, under his agreeable and loquacious escort, was to see the salt-works. The dykes, confining the sea-water—admitted by sluices into the great tank or reservoir, where it was evaporated by the action of the sun—were covered with heaps of beautiful, white crystallized salt. Handsome and robust girls and women collected the particles of salt from the tank into shallow wooden tubs, which, when well filled, they carried nimbly and gracefully to the store-house. A sweet perfume, as of violets, was caused by the motion of the rake used in collecting the salt; and this accorded well with the general appearance of freshness and purity which met the eye in every direction. Fine athletic men were also actively engaged, here and there, at heavy labour, which they performed apparently with the greatest ease. An air of cheerfulness seemed to pervade the entire party, while laughter, song, and lively jests were heard around. The custom-house officers alone—who still retain here the ancient name of *gabeloux*, and whose province it is to prevent salt being sold without payment of duty—stalked about with gloomy, sullen, or suspicious looks.

My guide introduced me to the leader of these men as a country-man—that is to say, a Parisian. The little, active, sinewy, bustling, conceited fellow, was presented to me merely under his *soubriquet* of “the Parisian,” which he considered a highly honourable title. He teased and irritated me with absurd inquiries about Paris, representing himself as having moved in its highest circles, and expressed the deepest and most pitiful contempt of the provincials, amongst whom he was banished; but in all things, he excepted my guide, as being half a Parisian.

"They certainly are honest and good-natured, sir," said he, concluding his remarks upon the characteristics of the people ; "but genius, education, talents—talents, sir, *none*, as we used to write in the *signalements*, when I was in the city police. This one does what the mayor orders ; the other has the greatest respect for the parson ; men and women, all are perfectly besotted by religion. Do you know what would be most needed here ? That the company from *Les Ambigus* should be sent to enact 'The Bishop and the Parson.' You know that charming play ? But, bah ! three-fourths of these creatures do not know there is such a place in the world as a theatre. They go to church, sir—to *church*, and that is enough for them ! Yes, you may believe it or not ; in the entire station, there are scarcely to be found a dozen fellows with spirit enough to amuse themselves by smuggling salt ; and amongst these, there is hardly one who does not allow himself to be seized almost at once ! There is truly neither credit nor satisfaction in such a service."

Content now paid some compliments to this gentleman's vigilance and dexterity, and mentioned an affair in which he had lately evinced both, in the discovery of a deep-laid smuggling plot. But with a show of modesty, he proudly declined the praise.

"How could one exhibit skill here ?" said he, shrugging his shoulders ; "it is totally superfluous. But, sir, the *Répertoire*—one remembers one's *Répertoire* still, and it is not quite in vain, I hope, that one has been an *habitué* of *Les Ambigus*. Do you not recollect, a perfectly similar scene to that in which I acted with these blockheads, is represented in the 'Sexton of St. Paul's ?'—a charming piece that !"

"Do you see that fellow yonder ?" he continued, after an interruption caused by some inquiries from one of his men—"he is one of the brightest-brained amongst them—he who is

standing there gazing into his salt-vat, as if his happiness had fallen into it. It is true, he has been unfortunate ; poor Pierre Louis ! his journey has turned out badly ; and while he was away, the people here have allowed his child to fall sick, and have so mismanaged his salt, that it affords him no return. But if he would only set himself to work in earnest, he might yet have a good after-crop. Instead of that, there he stands, and will engage in nothing, nor take any advice. There is no help for it, he says ; and why so ?—because the Kourigan has cast an evil spell over him ! ”

This was my friend the grenadier. I could not repress my emotion, and an exclamation of sympathy and distress at this new trial which had befallen the poor couple, in whom I had taken such a warm interest during the few days I had been with them.

The Parisian regarded this as an expression of surprise and admiration at what he had communicated, and went on—

“ You have, no doubt, already heard of this absurd superstition ? Evidently you are of the romantic school, sir ; for my part, I am classic—purely classic ; but that matters little —intellectual people always understand each other. As for these creatures, whom superstition has robbed of all the dignity of man, they do not comprehend that the lot of each of us—good or bad, as it may chance to be—is directed by fate. Napoleon called it *his star*, as you are aware. I also, who have now the honour of addressing you, have my star, and that one of no mean magnitude, I assure you. Two somnambulists, pupils of the renowned Lenormand, have foretold my union with an heiress of noble birth ! ”

I was glad when this man of many words was called away, as it afforded me an opportunity of looking after poor Pierre Louis ; but he had left the spot where for a long time he had stood so wo-begone. When Content had pointed out to me

every object of interest in the neighbourhood, we retraced our steps, and on the way observed a number of people assembled at the door of a tavern, from which issued boisterous sounds of revelry and song. We learned that this jovial party was collected on the occasion of the marriage of a cousin of Pierre Louis, who was known by the appellation of the salt-devourer, acquired by his being one of the most daring and successful of the salt-smugglers. I perceived with regret as we passed, that Pierre Louis had allowed himself to be persuaded to join this questionable company. He either did not, or pretended that he did not hear my call, asking him to accompany me to his house. I was about to make another attempt, but was prevented by the tormenting Parisian, who had overtaken, and now wished to obtrude his company upon us; but when I, under some pretext or other, peremptorily declined the honour, he accepted an invitation from some of the most respectable of the wedding-guests, and seated himself amongst them.

On entering the still gloomy sick-room, I found Jeanne seated near the cradle, with clasped hands, and eye riveted on her child. Without any salutation or further notice of me, she said, in a low, heart-thrilling tone—

“ Little Pierre is dying ! ”

I tried to soothe her, though she made no reply; but, rising from her seat, paced once or twice up and down the room, wringing her hands, as if trying to command her feelings; then seating herself by the hearth, she covered her face, and wept and sobbed bitterly. Soon this paroxysm was over, and she remained perfectly quiet and motionless. The laboured breathing of the poor sick baby, and the riotous sounds of the wedding-party, alone broke the deathlike stillness that prevailed around.

From a slight knowledge of medicine which I had incidentally acquired very early in life, I could plainly discover, on a

more close observation of the child, that there was no cause for such great alarm, as the symptoms rather seemed to argue a favourable crisis. After giving my opinion, I tried to impress upon her that she had permitted the already-mentioned evil omens seen on our way home to usurp too much influence over her feelings.

"On the way, and *since*," she emphatically returned, as she rose from her chair, looked round in turn, and then knelt down again beside the cradle. To my further inquiries, she replied—

"I was sitting here in the dusk—before you, sir, came in,—and I had wept so much that light and darkness, day and night, were all alike to me; suddenly I was roused by hearing the sound of a脚步 quite close to me, and then a sigh; but on looking sharply all around, I could discover no source from whence they might have proceeded. Presently, I heard similar sounds, and then my name distinctly uttered. My heart at once told me that this was a warning! He who once loved me so dearly must have risen from the grave to let me know that death is preparing a resting-place near his. One thing is certain, that ere this night be over, some Christian in this house must die!"

I was about to answer, when she suddenly interrupted me by a cry of terror, as, springing to her feet, she pointed, speechless and panic-struck, to a door that led from the yard into the garden, and which was visible from the window by the pale moonlight. True enough, there stood in the doorway, the shadow of which half concealed him, a strange-looking being, small, deformed, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, which was placed so low on his brow, as quite to conceal the face, and holding a long staff in his hand.

"There he is!" faltered Jeanne; "the Kourigan!"

As softly and quickly as I could, I slipped out by the back-

door, and crept along, under the shadow of the wall, towards the door in question. I was just within reach of the figure, when it perceived me, and vanished. I would have followed, thinking I again saw it disappear through a gap in the garden hedge ; but I considered that any further search through the adjacent hedges, bushes, and gardens, after one acquainted doubtless with the localities, would be of no avail ; while, perhaps, in the meantime Jeanne might be exposed to still further annoyance.

As I returned to the room, Pierre Louis was entering by another door, and was evidently under the exciting influence of wine. He regarded neither the groans of his child, nor the tears of its mother, but rallied the latter with thoughtless laughter on her over-solicitude—tried to caress her, and when she repulsed him with a look of horror, he grew irritable, and almost rough ; but soon his thoughts took another direction, that speedily restored his good-humour. He went through the room talking all sorts of confused nonsense ; laughed, and then again spoke of the jolly trick they were going to play, by which he would make up for the loss his journey had caused him—would be enabled to purchase medicine for little Pierre, and a handsome dress for Jeanne. As to danger, there was none—it was mere fun—ha, ha, ha ! They had settled the *gabelou*—drowned the fellow !—for once in his life the shrewd Parisian was outwitted.

“ Drowned ! In the name of wonder, what are you talking of ! ” cried the poor wife, as she tried to keep him in the house. “ Whom have you drowned ? What scheme have you on foot, Pierre Louis ? ”

“ O you little fool ! ” he stammered, “ we have only drowned the *gabelou* in *wine*, at the child’s wake—what nonsense am I talking ! —at the marriage of our cousin the salt-eater, I should rather say. Yes, drowned, so that he shall mistake

the moon for a cheese, and stumble over his own feet—the boasting coxcomb ! And then—then we'll play him a trick with the salt ; fine fun that, ha, ha, ha ! Will the gentleman remain here or join us ?”

With these words, he reeled out of the house. Jeanne motioned me to follow him, and then—her heart, torn by conflicting emotions caused by the condition of her child, her own over-wrought feelings, and the terror inspired by the ambiguous expressions that had dropped from the lips of her half-unconscious husband—she sank down beside the cradle, as if crushed beneath the load of her varied and accumulating sorrows.

What the unfortunate man's intentions were, I could not well define, but I followed him in the vague hope of preventing any further mischief, or averting in some measure the results of what he might have previously engaged in. We had not gone many steps, when we met the Parisian, accompanied by several young men, who seemed, evidently from some bad intent, to be highly pleased with his wretched condition. And, in good truth, a most ludicrous object he was, as may be supposed of a being of his nature under such circumstances. As he at once attached himself to me, I could not avoid yielding to his request that I should conduct him home, and hoped, by so doing, to avert any premeditated harm from accruing to him. The remainder of the party, to my surprise, seemed quite satisfied with this arrangement ; and we separated, after I had urgently requested Pierre Louis to go home, and get quietly into bed.

They seemed to go, as they said they would, in the direction of Pierre Louis's house ; while I, as well as I could, dragged the officer along to his abode, which lay round tho corner of the next street.

Scarcely, however, had we gone out of sight and hearing

of the other party, than the Parisian suddenly stopped his incoherent talk, and snatches of tuneless song, and walked as firmly and erect as possible, looking at me at the same time with a most extraordinary expression of mingled gravity and fun.

As I was quite taken by surprise, and, in a word, utterly confounded—perceiving, also, that my gentleman was, on his part, rather confused and awkward—it was no small relief to me when, after a pause of a few seconds, he burst into a loud laugh, exclaiming—

“What, sir, is it possible that you also—even *you!*—have allowed yourself to be deceived by a clumsy *ruse*, which was merely intended for these stupid clowns? Ah! we know the value of our *repertorium*—‘The Feigned Drunkard!’ Can it be that you are unacquainted with it?—a charming play! Then, ‘Upon the Knaves, one and all!’ also by Scribe—but no, let me see, it is by Bayerd, is it not? You see I personate both these heroes—I combine; out of two old plays I produce a new one! But you will grant that in both instances the fellows deserve a sound lesson. Not for the sake of a grain or two of salt—that I would willingly let them have; but because they wanted to mystify the Parisian! Such a thing is contrary to the nature of the Parisians, thoroughly antipathetic—perfectly incompatible with their temperament. First, I was, forsooth, to pay the reckoning, and inebriate myself with them, and then they meant to make free with the salt; and, moreover, they would have had the pleasure of laughing at me to-morrow; but you shall yourself see, or I am very much mistaken, that this is a trick I do not envy them their share of. Anything else in the world for me, but no mystification! Then we know that ‘he who has the last laugh, has the best laugh.’ Your very obedient servant, sir—*au revoir!*”

So saying, and making some extraordinary gestures, in-

tended to betoken his prowess and daring, he hastened down the street toward the salt-pits.

The whole thing being now quite clear, I judged it best to follow quickly after Pierre Louis, that, in case of his having, as I hoped, returned home, I might, if possible, prevent his joining the salt-stealers. But should I not meet him there, I felt that I must allow the affair to take its course, as any further search on my part would be quite fruitless, owing to my ignorance of the localities. Reprehensible as the Parisian's trick was in my eyes—a trick which, instead of preventing a crime, allowed it to be perpetrated, in order to satisfy his vanity by its discovery and punishment—still, I could not deny that Pierre Louis and his friends would have themselves alone to blame for its consequences. But to say the truth, my thoughts were chiefly occupied by Jeanne, as, with a gloomy presentiment, I hastened towards her dwelling, which, owing to the extreme darkness of the night—the moon being concealed behind heavy masses of cloud—I did not reach without much wandering about, and much loss of time. When, however, I had done so—thanks to a fleeting moonbeam—and was about to enter, I descried a shadowy figure stealing along the garden wall, and soon recognised it to be the same that had previously eluded me—the Kouriagn!"

This time I was more successful; escape would have been almost impossible, as I was within about a hundred steps of the figure, which, in a few moments, I had seized by the collar. He shrieked; and his broad hat falling from his head, revealed the wan, sickly face of a deformed young peasant, turned towards me with a most touching expression of pain and terror. I shook him well, asking in a sharp tone what business he had here. Laying an emaciated finger on his lips, and pointing at the same time to the casement where the faint light of Jeanne's lamp was seen to glimmer, he said,

in a low tone, but with singular emphasis—"They call me Gratien!"

This entirely explained the source of Jeanne's fears. On further inquiry, he acknowledged that it was he who had pursued her with his goblin-like apparition, and had traced the writing in the sand. I asked—perhaps not with the indulgence that was due to him for her sake, but I was in a hurry, and felt all my indignation roused—

"What do you mean by this, Gratien? You love poor, kind-hearted Jeanne, and yet you have terrified her beyond measure, and have been the source of bitter distress and anguish to her. She supposed you to be the Kourigan. And how will this end, fellow? I have a great mind to put you in confinement."

The wild pathos of his words now plainly showed me that his deep-rooted, but hopeless love had been the cause of his wandering away from home, and of the disordered state of his naturally weak intellect. And yet who could have the cruelty to speak to him of the utter folly of this affection—an affection without any conscious aim or desire? For even in his constant untiring efforts and artifices to be near Jeanne without her knowledge of his presence, attended as these were with the greatest difficulty, he had no conscious object in view. It was merely an attempt of a poor creature to remain in that element wherein alone it could exist. The longer he spoke, the more puzzled I became as to what I should do with him; burning with impatience as I was all the while to know some further particulars about Jeanne, her child, and Pierre Louis. However, as to the latter, I comforted myself with the assurance that he must be at home, and could not leave it without my knowledge.

While I was making an effort to persuade Gratien to go quietly home, the report of a gun broke upon the stillness of

the night, and was quickly succeeded by another. Relaxing my grasp of the unhappy fellow, I hastened in the direction from whence the shot proceeded, under a firm conviction that some heavy calamity had befallen Jeanne. As I passed along, windows and doors were thrown open on all sides; men rushed into the street, and many of them ran in the same direction as myself; women looked out of the windows, uttering words of inquiry and lamentation; and there was a loud and incessant barking of dogs. We soon heard the noisy buzz of mingled voices as they approached, and on turning a corner, we saw a crowd of people coming up from the shore, collected round some men, who bore along either a severely wounded or lifeless body. I distinguished Pierre Louis's name, and immediately turned, in order, if possible, to prepare Jeanne for the fearful tidings. Hoping to gain ground upon the party, I made a short cut through the gardens, but again I missed my way, and arrived at the back entrance just in time to see them carrying the bleeding corpse in through the front-door of the room where Jeanne sat beside the cradle, her thoughts so wholly engrossed with her child, that she had heard nothing of all the stir and tumult without. She was seated with her back to the door, but as the men entered, she turned quickly round, and her eye at once fell upon the drooped and bleeding head of her husband, upon which the lamp cast a sickly gleam.

A moment passed, which no human being might venture to describe. When I had in a measure recovered my self-command, I saw the poor wife kneeling beside the body; the men who stood round were trembling violently. She carefully wiped the blood from the ashy-pale brow, addressed him in terms of the most plaintive tenderness—urgently entreated him to speak even one word to her—to recognise his own wife—not, not to leave her; in a word, she seemed so little to

comprehend the terrible reality, that for a moment I feared lest the shock had been too great for her mind to sustain uninjured. Gradually, however, she seemed to become aware of the uselessness of her exertions. Starting up, she extended her blood-stained hands towards us, and gazed round with an imploring, helpless, and inquiring look ; at length she slowly faltered out—

“ Say, say—sure he is not dead ? He *cannot* be dead !—the doctor must know. Where is the doctor ?”

She was told that the doctor would be here directly ; and I approached to try to withdraw her from the body. But my movement, and a few words which accompanied it, appeared suddenly to reveal the full truth. Falling down again beside her lifeless husband, she laid his head upon her knee, and gazed at it with a look of agonizing woe, while her tears fell in torrents upon his face, and mingled with his blood. Her lamentations were so heart-rending, that we shrank back instinctively ; none dared venture to obtrude with weak words of human consolation upon such sorrow as hers. We hoped, indeed, that the extreme violence of her grief would soon wear itself out ; but it seemed much more likely that the intensity of her feelings must over-tax her physical powers, and that the very stream of life would exhaust itself in this overwhelming flood. Gradually her words, her voice, her entire manner became more and more wild ; and her occasional peals of convulsive laughter sounded far more dreadful than her lamentations had done. I was quite convinced that we should soon have to restrain a maniac. At length, she grew more calm while kneeling beside the corpse, herself like a marble figure, with hands tightly clenched ; but it was the calmness of ebbing reason—the vacant look, the low piteous wail, the whispered unconnected words, that at last died away, leaving only the motion of the lips—all told the fearful truth.

These moments of horror-thrilling stillness were suddenly interrupted by a soft plaintive cry—the little one wanted his mother. This cry broke through the almost torpid grief of the sufferer, recalled her fast-fleeting consciousness, and preserved her intellect—her life. She turned quickly round. Little Pierre had raised himself up in his cradle, and, smiling at his mother through his tears, stretched out his hands, as if imploring her help.

Uttering a cry of unspeakable pathos, which seemed to come from the inmost depths of her soul, she sprang up, and darting to the cradle, caught up her child with the tenderest care, and clasped it to her heart, in a loving embrace. None of the men who stood by could refrain from tears; it was as though the sweet infantine voice had broken the spell of horror that rested upon each.

At this moment, the doctor entered the room: he was led over to Pierre Louis, whom we had laid upon his bed. His business there was soon over. He placed his hand upon the heart, held a mirror before the mouth, then with an ominous shake of his head, and shrug of his shoulders, he drew the coverlet over the blood-stained head. Jeanne's eager eye narrowly watched the physician, and understood too well his significant gestures. She staggered for a moment. I sprang over to support her; but the child had again stirred, and cried for his mother. With a desperate effort she summoned up all her strength, seized the doctor's hand, and, drawing him towards the cradle, awaited his opinion with fixed look and folded hands. He was a quiet, elderly, sensible, and skilful man. After having carefully examined the child, he put some questions to its mother, which she answered in a concise and summary manner, like a soldier upon duty.

"The child is out of danger," he said at length.

"God be praised for ever and ever!" cried Jeanne, as she

fell on her knees beside the cradle, and softly breathed a prayer over her little one, without taking any farther notice of what was passing around.

While the doctor remained to write a prescription, we all left the house, and went our several ways. One of the men confirmed, in a few words, my previous supposition. He told me that Pierre Louis, and some other young fellows, who were noted salt-smugglers, had taken advantage of the Parisian's supposed state of intoxication to carry off some loads of salt, that were under his care till the requisite duty should be paid. But this officer had awaited them at his post, and when on repeated challenges, they neither answered nor desisted from their illegal undertaking, he and one of his men fired. His ball struck Pierre Louis, who headed the party, and on receiving the wound he leaped up in the air, and then fell down without uttering a sound.

Two days after, he was laid in his grave. I, in company with the entire population of Saillé, attended the remains of this poor fellow to his long home. It was a long and solemn procession of men and women attired in their Sunday dresses, and walking two abreast. Last of all followed Gratien, his tattered garments all besmeared with the red earth of the moor, his head drooping low, and his long dishevelled hair hanging over his face. He did not venture within the church-yard, but knelt down outside; and as soon as the blessing was pronounced, and the clay about to be shovelled over the coffin, he started up, and quickly disappeared behind the church.

I went directly to see Jeanne. Her head was laid upon the pillow beside her infant's, and she was quietly weeping. The child played with her hair, while her thick-falling tears bedewed his little hands. Then he smiled sweetly at her, and tried by all kinds of gentle tones to gain her attention. He appeared to be making a rapid recovery. I retired with-

out exchanging a word with Jeanne, by whom I was quite unobserved.

I spent the succeeding weeks in making excursions into the interior of the country, and to the adjoining islands. On my return to Saillé, I learned that Jeanne, on her child's perfect restoration to health, had gone to reside with her guardian at her early home. Whilst on a walking excursion in that neighbourhood, I made a *détour* in order to pay a farewell visit to the widow. As I was descending a hill, however, at a short distance I recognised Jeanne seated on a mule, dressed in deep mourning, her child placed before her, returning home by the same road that we had formerly travelled together. Gratien held the bridle and carefully led the mule, occasionally turning round towards the tearless, melancholy, yet submissive countenance of her who had suffered so deeply and lost so much before returning to his care, so far at least as the poor imbecile creature was capable of taking care of any one. I could not prevail upon myself to go to meet and take leave of her, but, deeply affected by the scene, I bent my steps homewards.

The sky was clear and cloudless, occasionally a soft breeze conveyed from afar the mournful murmur of the sea. Some maidens' sweet voices were singing, on the other side of the thicket, the plaintive melody of one of Brittany's wedding-songs.



## THE WHITE BOAT.

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THE traveller who visits La Vendée, with the stirring memory of its gigantic struggle of loyalty *versus* Revolution fresh in his mind, and looks on it as the land that, in the short space of three years, became the grave of five Republican armies, as well as of the greater proportion of its own heroic population, and was thus converted into a vast and blood-steepled wilderness of smoking ruins—would naturally expect to find in the inhabitants a people gloomy and daring, proud, impetuous, and warlike.

To his astonishment, he sees himself surrounded by a race whose character is in every respect the reverse of this—quiet, thoughtful, taciturn almost to dulness, and whose might, like that of their powerful yoked oxen, slumbers and asks but for repose. Such is the case especially in the hill-country of La Vendée proper, the region of the pure Pictish blood; the people of the plain-country bordering on old Anjou, are distinguished by greater vivacity and friendliness.

It is in contemplating this aspect of the Vendean character, that we learn to estimate the power of that deadly grasp

which the bold hand of Revolution must have laid on the innermost sanctuary of popular feeling, to provoke an outburst of resistance, so vigorous and so long sustained.

But if the physiognomy of the Vendéans be marked by a general sameness, nothing can be more varied than the aspect of their country. The eastern shore is indeed barren, dark, and gloomy ; but to the north, stretches a long tract of undulating country, rich in golden meadows and fertile fields, and dotted with groups of noble forest trees, in whose shadow nestles many an orchard-circled château and peaceful hamlet, while here and there may be seen a large and populous village with spire pointing to the skies. The high hedges and deep embowered lanes, turned to such good account in the burgher struggles of the Chouan warfare, are still the peculiar and distinctive characteristics of the scene. This is, indeed, the *Bocage* ; and wherever there is an opening, wide tracts of heath are seen, offering the strongest and most picturesque contrast by the bright blossoms of the yellow furze, and the purple glow of the heath-flower, to the solemn edging of green by which they are bordered. Totally different is the appearance of La Vendée proper—a long and boundless plain of waving corn, almost without trees, except where some narrow strip of orchard-ground points to the neighbourhood of château or village. No sooner is the golden harvest brought in, than the waste and dreary stubble lands are covered with loads of lime, giving to them, in the distance, the appearance of an interminable battle-field strewn with bleaching bones.

Proceeding onward towards the south, to the marshes—the *Marais*, as it is called—we again find ourselves in a new world. The land here shows, like an accident, an exception—a creation of art, a sort of rustic Venice. The corn and the fruits seem to ripen on piles, and the flocks to be grazing on floating pastures. Ever since the sixteenth century, efforts

have been made to reclaim tracts of this marsh by drainage on the Dutch plan, so that the district should rather have been called Little Holland than "Little Poitou," as it is. Some business connected with one of these recently drained tracts, gave me the long-desired opportunity of seeing something of the mode of life of the Cabanneers—the name by which the inhabitants of the reclaimed lands are known, as Hutters is that appropriated to the dwellers in the marsh.

I had made an appointment with Guillaume Blaisot, the farmer with whom my business was to be transacted, to meet him at Marans, at the mouth of the Sèvre, opposite to the Isle of Rhé, in Pertuis-Poitou. I reached Maillepais, after a very uncomfortable journey, by the Diligence, hoping to proceed by water.

As I was waiting at the door of the little inn for the arrival of the boat that mine host had promised me, I perceived an old acquaintance approaching, whom, by his little waxcloth hat and his wooden leg, I had at once recognised as Maître Berand, better known as Fait-tout. Berand was one of those equivocal traders who get a livelihood by various nameless handicrafts, and who, in common parlance, are said to live by their wits. He now assured me that business called him in the direction in which I was going. I invited him to embark with me in the boat, which at that moment came alongside. He thankfully accepted my invitation, and I thus secured a companion, who, if not altogether trustworthy, was at least well acquainted with the country and its inhabitants, and who was, moreover, himself an interesting subject for my observation.

Immediately on leaving Maillepais, we found ourselves in the district familiarly known as *le Marais Mouillé*, and a wonderful spectacle it presented. As far as the eye could reach, it seemed as it were a water-landscape whereon num-

berless islets, fringed with willows and ivy, were floating ; now and then we passed a larger one, on which hemp and flax were cultivated. On the most elevated point of these little islands stand the solitary dwellings of the *hütters* ; they are of plaited wicker-work, and look like so many beehives. They have neither window nor chimney, and the door appears too low for a full-grown man to enter without stooping. We could generally distinguish a fire flickering on the hearth, and sending its smoke through all the interstices of the basket-work. The older huts are often covered with a mass of vegetation ; and not unfrequently the willow-wands woven into the dwelling, bud and sprout, and form a thick green trellis-work of leafy branches around the hut. The people find their food in the waters by which they are surrounded, the neighbouring towns offering a ready market for their fish and ducks. In winter, when the waters often rise to the level of their dwellings, the poor people are forced to take refuge, with their wives and children, in their boats, which are kept by them, ready for such emergencies. In these, they frequently pass long days and nights, till the floods are abated.

Our passage among the islets was much retarded by the tangled masses of the water-lily, yellow and white, the leaves of which were thickly spread over the surface ; and our approach not unfrequently scared whole flocks of wild ducks and other water-fowl from their shelter, and sent them screaming and cackling over our heads.

The *hütters* are said, by the proprietors on the coast, to have very inadequate perceptions and very short memories of the distinction between *meum* and *tuum*. My companion, however, soon proved that this confusion of ideas was not peculiar to the islanders. Whenever he saw a snare hanging from a willow, he hastened to the spot ; if the jar of a leech-gatherer were left on the ground, he scrupled not to empty it into his

own ; and when I asked if his friends on the islands were thus solicitous to provide for his wants, he laughed, and said that what was taken from a hutter was only indemnification ; for that when he went round the islands with his pack, the wives and maidens were not particular in the matter of needles and ribbons—a cross made at the back of any article going in evidence that it was not stolen.

As I wished to see the interior of one of these huts, we drew towards the shore, and I landed. The inside was incrusted with a black and shining coating of soot. In the dusky background, two cows were lying down, and chewing the cud at their ease before a sort of rough crib. This was the only piece of furniture in the hut, with the exception of a pair of earthen pitchers, a clumsy stool, and a hurdle covered with a layer of moss ; on this lay a woman whose appearance showed her to be suffering from the biliary fever so common in this moist and foetid atmosphere. To our words of comfort she at first made no reply, but at length, rousing herself, she said—

“ What good can anything do *me* ? I have seen the *White Boat* ! All I want is the priest.”

These words had evidently a startling effect, not only on the sailor who had accompanied us, but on our friend Fait-tout, notwithstanding his habitual readiness to parade his scepticism.

“ “ The White Boat ! ” ” exclaimed both together, in a half whisper, at the same time looking towards the shore.

“ Yes, yes,” continued the sick woman, with feverish excitement ; “ I was coming with a bundle of willows from the other side of the island, and there, gliding noiselessly through the channel, I saw the death-boat, with the yellow dwarf seated at the helm ; and as I passed, I heard him cough and groan ; I felt his poison breath upon me, and fell to the

ground. My husband found me lying, and brought me home, and I have never raised my head since, and never shall."

I endeavoured to soothe the poor woman, and to explain the thing away as an optical delusion—but all in vain ; she stared wildly into the darkness, and my companions slipped quietly away ; I myself felt a sort of indefinable dread, thus left alone in the dusky hut with the dying woman, and hastened into the air.

When we got back to the boat, our conversation was in monosyllables ; and, in order to set it agoing, I made some inquiries respecting the young Blaisot whom I was to meet at Marans. At the sound of his name, Fait-tout started from his reverie, but made as though he had not heard me ; and called my attention to the great number of boats that were lying in a little bay which we were then crossing. It was no uncommon sight, but he wished to divert me from my subject.

We soon came alongside of an embankment, on which we rather heard than saw some travellers—for the view was entirely obstructed by a low growth of willows and alders. At intervals, the plaintive monotonous chant of some shepherds broke upon the ear ; they were singing one of those Christmas carols (*Hymnes de Noël*, or *Nau*), wherein the shepherds of Poitou celebrate the glad tidings that it was given to the shepherds of Palestine to hear first. One of them, seated on a projection of the dyke, with folded hands and head reverently inclined, closed the strain in the following words—

“Or prien tous à génie  
Jesus Christ d'amour doucette,  
Qu'il nous fusso bonne acceil,  
Et que notre paix soit faite  
Au grein jour, quen sonnera la trompette,  
Qu'ein sein paradis nous mette  
Au royaume paternau,  
Nau! nau!”

We did not reach Marans till late in the evening, and there were no tidings of Blaisot at the inn. To my repeated and urgent inquiries, the host replied with a counter-question—

“Do you mean the old Jerome Blaisot?”

“No; the question now is of his son, Guillaume,” said Fait-tout, answering for me, and with singular emphasis.

“The great Guillaume!” repeated the man, stepping back in astonishment.

“And why not?” I rejoined sharply. “I have very good grounds for expecting him, having made an appointment with him to take charge of a business which is likely to be as advantageous to him as to me. I should rather ask what reason he can have for staying away.”

“Nay,” replied mine host with some hesitation, “how can any third person assign reasons for another? To-morrow is our market-day, and there will surely be some of Blaisot’s people in the town;—you can ask them, sir, any questions you please.”

“Ask, indeed!” muttered Fait-tout in a mocking tone, as I moved away half satisfied, and the host devoted himself with obsequious civility to some freshly-arrived guests.

Marans is now the principal port of La Vendée, and the dépôt of the export fisheries, and I was early awakened by the bustle of the market. It was thronged with hatters, bringing in the rich spoils of the fishing and the chase, as well as by Cabanneers, and peasants from the plain; the former with wool and flax, the latter with heavy loads of corn and wood, in ponderous waggons drawn by six yoke of oxen. Still, all my inquiries for Blaisot were unavailing; and the evident shyness in answering—the frequent assumption of stupidity, as though they could not understand me, raised my previous uneasiness to the highest pitch.

On my return to the inn, I found Berand the centre of

a wondering circle, and prosecuting one of the thousand branches of his vocation. He was etching an allegorical decoration on the arm of a young sailor, and had been profuse in sentimental verses and allusions; he now showed me his work with evident self-complacency.

"You see that it is all that could be wished," he said. "Le Fier-gas could desire nothing better, were he the king himself."

"Ay," rejoined the young man, whose cognomen he had given, "for a bright half-dollar one has a right to expect something."

"And I have accordingly given you the 'best article,' my son," said the artificer. "The altar of love, religion—death and the Royal flower; what could you have more? You and le Bien-nommé, you are the only ones to whom such luck has fallen."

"Indeed," replied the young man, shaking his head emphatically; "then I am the only one, for le Bien-nommé lies deep beneath the water!"

"What is that you are saying?"

"It is so, indeed," said another of the bystanders; "his body has never been seen, but his boat was found keel upward."

"No one knows how it happened," observed a third. "Some say that he met the Lady of the Pool!"

"Who is that?" said I, attracted rather by the expression, and by the manner of the speaker, than by the fact itself.

"Why, the Lady of the Pool is she who entangles the boats in her long tresses, and so drags them down into the deep."

I now took counsel with mine host, and he advised me to proceed in his conveyance to the cottage of the Blaisots, which, he said, was distant about a mile and a half. Fait-tout would

be my conductor, as he was at home, and had business everywhere.

The matter was soon arranged, and in half an hour Berand and I were placed side by side in the little car, with a board for our seat. My guide had plied the flask so deeply in honour of his last performance, that it was not without hesitation that I committed the reins to his hand.

We soon came in sight of the long tract of land reclaimed from the waters. Canals, small and great, intersected it in every direction, and emptied themselves by an infinity of sluices into ponds varying in size. It was surrounded by a deep ditch, bordered for the most part with oaks. The numerous proprietors and farmers form a corporation for the management of the drainage; and their simple and appropriate regulations have secured to them a large measure of independence, amid the mechanism of modern centralization, and the despotism of modern liberality.

The rich alluvial soil requires no manuring. Indeed, that it was covered by the sea within the historical period, is proved by the frequent discovery of ships' keels, and other fragments, as well as by the appearance of lofty oyster-banks here and there. The fallow fields afford a generous pasturage to numerous herds of oxen, and to a breed of the heavy horses of the country.

The sun was declining, and the simple but varied landscape was bathed in rosy light—all the more beautiful from its contrast with the silvery vapour that began to rise from the lower grounds, and that mingled with, and broke it into a thousand rays, as it fell on the pools and the broad canals. At sunset we reached Jerome Blaisot's cottage—one of a somewhat different construction to the greater part of those we had previously seen.

In a field by the roadside, I saw an old man and a child

keeping sheep. The former had a sheepskin coat over his shoulders, and was resting his chin upon his staff and looking attentively at us. A black sheep of unusual size trotted familiarly by his side with a familiarity that evinced a connexion of a peculiar nature between them.

"There is old Jacques the shepherd, and his Flemish sheep," said my guide, with a friendly greeting to the old man. "The creature gives three times as much wool as any other sheep, and as much milk besides as three goats; it belongs to him as the chief shepherd."

"Ay, ay," responded the old man, in reply to the last words, "it is with this beast as with the King of France, who never dies: when his time is out, the next best takes his place. That is my right, is it not, *La Bien-gagnée?*" he added, affectionately stroking his favourite, which seemed conscious of deserving the name.

"At them! at them, *Flandrine!*" said the old man suddenly, and in a half whisper, to his attendant; and in a moment the sensible creature set off, and soon collected the straying sheep together, showing as much zeal as discretion in the conduct of the affair.

"How have you been able to teach the creature this?" said I, by way of beginning a conversation with the old man.

"Well, then," he replied half musing, "the brute creatures only need to be reminded, you see. There is in every beast some trace of its great Creator; only for the most part we tease or worry this out of them, according to our selfish will.—You see, sir," he continued, turning directly towards me, "we are always forgetting that the shepherd is here for the sake of the sheep, and not the sheep on account of the shepherd."

"And instinct is powerful," I added, without bestowing much thought on the subject.

"And so, instinct is the name the gentry give it? Well, the name is of no great consequence. The sheep, like all the brutes that remember the earthly paradise, has a *special gift*. You cannot find it out by thinking, but my Bien-gagnée knows whether good or ill luck is to befall us in the day."

"Then you may rest in peace, my friend," cried my conductor, "for the brute has a noble appetite, and that is the best sign for man or beast, all the world over. And now, let your youngster show the gentleman the way to Blaisot's, for I want to go in a contrary direction. *Au revoir, sir!*" And so saying, my mysterious but pleasant companion alighted, and disappeared at once behind the hedge. The youngster, however, sprang into the vacant seat, and carefully drove the car along the narrow, miry road, to the comfortable dwelling of the Blaisots.

As we were approaching, an elderly man came out, and hastily advanced to meet us. But when he got near enough to distinguish our features he suddenly stopped, and without either listening to or answering us, kept calling aloud "Loubette! Loubette!" till a young maiden stepped over the threshold, whom at first I only remarked for her extreme plainness, and her tall, ungainly form. When I had seen her more nearly, I became conscious of a look of energy and intelligence in the depths of her large gray eyes, that glimmered through the dark lashes like stars through the mist.

My appearance seemed rather to surprise than to alarm her. With an air of mingled simplicity and good breeding, she invited me to enter. I found that Fait-tout had been right in advising me to keep to Loubette: she was evidently the head of the house. On my asking for her brother, the father uttered an exclamation; but a warning look from her restored his composure.

"You are, then, the gentleman who sent the letter that we

gave back to the postman two days ago?" said Loubette quietly, but with a penetrating glance.

"Gave back again!" I repeated; "and why did you do that?"

"Because he to whom it was addressed is not in the country."

"Not to be found in all Little Poitou!" exclaimed the old man.

"But you know where he is," I rejoined; "you could have given the postman the necessary instructions."

"We know nothing," cried the father; "and he who says otherwise is no friend of ours. The tall Guillaume is away on his own errand, without either consulting or revealing it to us,—and this I do solemnly aver."

"Yes, yes, father," interrupted the maiden; "you see that the gentleman meant well by my brother, and why then should you make a disturbance, or deny him? You will take some refreshment with us, sir?" And so saying, she covered the table, and thus diverted my questionings and my curiosity.

After a while, and when he had taken sundry long pulls at the cider-jug, the old Blaisot appeared to have regained his self-possession, and to have formed some great resolution. He began by asking me my reason for coming, and my answers had the effect of quieting his suspicions altogether; and without any farther allusion to his son, we talked of things in general, and then discussed the business I had in hand, and the conditions on which it could be executed.

By degrees, however, and with the deepening twilight, the conversation flagged and we sat in silence, each falling back upon his own thoughts. Loubette had been for a long time silent, with her eyes fixed on the hearth, whence the embers now shot up a ruddy glow that lighted the room with a dazzling glare, and then sinking down again, cast only strag-

gling rays of pale and flickering light around. Without, the wind sighed and moaned in half whispers through the thicket of reeds across the water, and came blustering with louder tones over the stubble-fields, now bringing sounds of other kinds from the far distance, so that even I was impressed by an undefinable sensation of awe.

Loubette threw fresh branches on the fire, which soon flared brightly and cheerfully enough, though the wood was very wet, and gave out all sorts of strange hissing and whistling sounds in burning.

"The 'Pavas' weep : that is a bad sign for the absent," said Loubette with a deep sigh, which the old man echoed in a hollow tone. "The gentleman brought him good luck," continued Loubette ; "if he were but once directed there, he and others might forget what"—

Here she suddenly broke off.

"No, no, it is all in vain !" muttered the old man to himself. "There is no such thing as good luck for one who has been rocked on the knees of the dead."

I inquired what he meant by this.

"I mean what my own eyes have seen," continued he, with mingled emotion and reserve. "For that matter, every one in Vix can tell you the story of the rocking-woman. But if you wish to hear it from me, why, with all my heart ! You see, sir, it was in the time of the great war, when I was newly married. It was a bad time ; and whatever pains one took, everything went wrong. Then my poor Sillette (God have mercy upon her !) gradually lost her spirits, and let her hands drop down, or sat with them folded, instead of working away where work was much needed—especially as our boy William was then born, and required to be taken care of. It was in vain that I told her of it, both kindly and crossly. I used often to say to her : 'If children are left to scream at night,

the old people in the grave awake.' It did no good: she let him scream on, and only wrapped herself up the more in the bed-clothes. So the child dwindled day by day, till it was pitiful to see him. One night, when I was half asleep myself, I thought I heard a humming sound; and when I was thoroughly aroused, I found sure enough that it was no dream. I sat up and listened again, and it was the humming of a spinning-wheel. And when I put out my head through the bed-curtains, there, at the other end of the room, in the bright moonlight, sat the grandmother who had been under the sod for seven years. And she spun on and on, rocking the child upon her knees the while. Can there be any good fortune for that poor child, who was made over by his own mother to the nursing of the dead? He who has been touched by the dead is doomed to misfortune! There is no blessing upon him. Something deathlike clings to him: no flocks, no crops prosper under his care—the hearts of all those he loves turn away from him: And so it is with our poor William; and it is not without reason that he is called 'Mourning-child.'"

"Did you ever see the spinning visitor after that?" inquired I.

"I took good care not to do so," replied he. "Why, every child knows that he who sees one of the dead return a second time, may as well get his own shroud ready. But I heard the spinning-wheel go round—who can say how often? However, the child throve afterwards; and strange to say, he seemed to turn away from his mother entirely, and attached himself to old Marion, the stable-woman."

We now sank back into the former oppressive silence. Loubette went up and down the room, busied about household matters, and often stood as if listening at the window; then she came and sat down with us again. Suddenly a most strange and piercing cry, like that of a bird, sounded

without. Both father and daughter started up, but each with a very different expression of countenance. He said, half loud—

“ It is the night-raven, and at so late an hour!—that, too, bodes no good.”

She seemed to be listening intently; and as three similar sounds were heard in quick succession, each drawing nearer and nearer, she said in a trembling voice, which was little in accordance with her words—

“ Ay, a boat must have disturbed him in his nest. It is the sleeping-time of beasts, but the eating-time of men. If you please, sir, supper is now ready.”

She had already lit a lamp, and we sat ourselves down to a table covered with a clean cloth, and well provided with simple fare. As the old peasant gradually thawed, and threw off the curse of suspicion—the sad inheritance of this people—I began to be quite comfortable; and only remarked after a while, that the girl, who had often risen from table to see about one thing or another, as well as about my sleeping quarters for the night, had now absented herself altogether.

The old man told me a good deal about his son—how brave, obedient, and industrious he used to be, and how he had been betrothed to a wealthy maiden of the district; who had, however, been faithless to him, and taken another person—and how, since then, he had become altered in everything. He was even going, in answer to a question of mine, to explain what he meant by this, when we suddenly heard heavy footsteps and the clattering of arms outside, and in a moment or two the door was opened, and the brigadier of the gendarmerie of Chaillé entered the room in full uniform, let the butt-end of his musket fall noisily on the floor, and greeted us in the peculiar, jovial, and free-and-easy tone belonging to his class.

Old Jerome rose, then sank down again as pale as death;

and the glass, which he took up by way of strengthening his courage, rattled against his teeth.

"Good appetite to you, sirs! and do not let me disturb you," said the gendarme, casting a keen and rapid glance around the room. "How goes it with your health, Papa Jerome?" continued he, as the old man sat opposite him, still silent and motionless; "and where in the world is Loubette? —she is not generally absent."

"Loubette?" said the old man, who, as it appeared to me, really did not at the moment know where she was; "why, is she not in the kitchen?"

"Old fox," said the gendarme in a sharper tone, and drawing nearer, "you know as well as I do that she is not; and now, then, out with it at once—where is she?"

"I—I will look for her," stammered the peasant, getting up and going towards the door.

"No such thing, old man; you are not to stir from this spot; and let us have no more tricks, if you please. You know quite well why I come, and we know just as well that your son is with you, here."

"My son—my William—here!" exclaimed the old man, with an air of surprise which must have appeared natural and genuine even to the gendarme. At least, he continued in a less harsh tone—

"Well, whether you know it or not, he is here, and we must take him up as a *Réfractaire*; so be reasonable, and at all events, get hold of the girl for me."

Blaisot swore by all the saints of Upper and Lower Poitou that he knew nothing about it; that his son had never told him a word. By this exaggeration of ignorance he only awoke again the suspicion of the brigadier.

"We know you," he exclaimed, stroking his mustachios; "everything is *white* here; and before you will help a servant

of the Government so much as with your little finger—but wait a little, and we will soon manage you."

The old man now declared in the most eloquent manner his attachment to the July dynasty, and his ignorance respecting any offence committed against any government whatsoever.

"Hold your peace, you old hypocrite!" replied the soldier, with a certain degree of restored confidence in his tone. "Do not we know you of old? Did not you do just the same when you were thirty or forty years younger? Sure I am, it is not so serious an affair as it was then. The Blues did not understand a joke; and a bullet or the guillotine soon made an end of the refractory. But still, mind what you are about, for the prison and the galleys are no trifle either, and an execution in the house—I say, old fellow!"

The poor man would perhaps have been able to bear all threats against life and liberty stoically enough, but the thought of being deprived of his goods and chattels by an execution woke up his covetousness—the hereditary vice of the peasants of Poitou—and he lost all control.

"For the sake of the Holy Virgin, M. Durand," he piteously exclaimed, with his hands clasped, "do but believe me! William has never returned home since"—

Here he stopped, having observed the scrutinizing glance cast at him by his tormentor, and continued in a less doleful tone—

"It has been through no fault of mine; how much I said to him when the lot fell upon him—and how I told him, over and over again, that he must make up his mind and obey, and be no 'bush-recruit.' But you know very well, my good M. Brigadier, as well as all Lower Poitou does, that since his betrothed jilted him and married another man, there is no getting him to leave the country, even though he were as free as a bird on the tree."

"That is the very thing, old man," exclaimed the gendarme in triumph. "He cannot leave Louise; and yesterday he was seen at Vallembrueuse, and is it likely that his own father should not know where he spent the night? But now we have had prattle enough; we must search the house thoroughly, and if we have to dig up the hearthstone to find him, yet find him we must!"

He was moving quickly towards the door, when Loubette's voice was heard outside in loud disputation, as it soon appeared, with the brigadier's men who were stationed without. One of them dragged her in, while she struggled violently, and defended herself with her tongue most courageously—

"Is this, then, the law, right, and good order of the day, to say nothing of its politeness," cried she, with her harsh but full-toned voice; "that a virtuous girl should be treated like a criminal, when she comes home from the field?"

"Why, only see now! the mistress of the house!" exclaimed the brigadier tauntingly. "And may we ask where thou comest from so late, old lady?"

"From a place where it is not usual to say 'thou' to girls one has not the honour of knowing," M. Gendarme," answered Loubette, with a degree of boldness that had a something of the heroic, when contrasted with her father's embarrassment.

After the dialogue had been carried on a while in this tone, growing even bitterer and bitterer, the experienced old soldier observed that she only pretended to be indignant, to conceal her distress and confusion, as well as to gain time, and induce him, through very anger, to abandon the part he had to play.

He therefore quickly composed himself, and said, in a tone of grave and ironical politeness—

"Now, then, we will take hold of the question with silk

gloves, and perhaps Miss Loubette will have the great kindness to inform us where she has just come from."

"Why, if you are quite bent upon knowing this great secret, I have been taking the shepherd his supper."

The gendarmes at once confronted her—they had caught her coming from the very opposite direction. But Loubette was not to be puzzled by this. She asserted that although she had gone round to the field where the sheep were feeding by the meadow, that had only been for the purpose of fetching the sickle, which she had forgotten at noon.

"Or, perhaps you may think that I wanted to cut old Jerome's bread with this sickle," added she with a sneer, as she threw down the sickle, which she really drew from under her apron.

The brigadier now tried to catch her by all manner of artful questions and assertions; but she parried them so well, that he began to contradict himself, and knew no longer what he was about.

"There's no catching the subtle creature!" he exclaimed at last, in dudgeon. "And there's no dragging the truth out of the stupid old Chouans either. Two of you stay here to watch these people, and the rest of us will rummage the whole place—he must be here."

The brigadier had taken no further notice of me than that implied in his first curt greeting, for he knew me before. But I plainly saw that he found my presence inconvenient. I followed him to the house-door, and heard one of the gendarmes say to him—"Was not that a boat that glided over the water behind the bushes yonder?"

In fact, we soon heard the sound of oars, and the trilling of a cheerful song, then a scream, and a momentary silence; then some quick oar-strokes, a rustling in the thicket; and, an instant after, the vagabond Berand, my travelling companion,

rushed towards the house, breathless, and evidently beside himself, and threw himself down upon the bank before the door. At once assailed by the brigadier, who not unreasonably charged him with being an old drunkard, he broke out into the following unconnected sentences—

“I have seen—seen him ! There—there—I tell—I tell you. He glided in his white boat out from the bushes—and—and—under the trees opposite—and he was gone !”

“But *who* there—what there, in the name of all that is holy ?” screamed out the brigadier in his impatience.

“Who ? He !” was the low reply ; “the white boat, and the little yellow man at the helm ! And he had a corpse in its white grave-clothes lying across the boat before him ; its head was hanging over the water !”

“The wooden-leg is drunk ; he has been dreaming !” laughed the brigadier.

“Would to God I had dreamt it, and were not sober !” said poor Berand, who had indeed been pretty effectually sobered by the fright. “But I have not only seen but heard. ‘Turn back, unhappy man !’ the figure exclaimed, ‘or I will turn thee round and round.’ The brandy still gave me courage to answer, ‘Man or woman, whom hast thou there ?’ But it cried out in a voice that went through the marrow of my bones, ‘I have got tall William to-day, and in eight days I shall have thee !’ That was enough for me ; and here I am, thank God, at least on dry land still ; and in eight days hence, I shall take pretty good care to be far enough from here !”

Scarcely had the cripple named the name of William, than the brigadier hurried off, with an exclamation, to the canal, and all his party after him. We heard the click of their muskets as they cocked them in setting off ; next, we heard the brigadier call out three times, and then a gun was fired ; and, on hastening to the place whence the sound came, we

found the gendarmes collected on the bank of the side canal, by which Blaisot's land was bounded, and occupying a portion of the causeway from which one could see part of the great canal and its nearest ramifications.

"If the little yellow man has escaped us, he has at all events left his freight behind him," called out the brigadier, as he pointed towards a moonlit spot on the opposite side of the small canal which belonged to Blaisot's land. With horror, we discovered a corpse stretched out at full length in the moonlight. The gendarmes brought out the boat in which our wooden-legged friend had just arrived, and went to fetch the body. Scarcely had they laid it down upon the dyke, than Loubette, followed by her father and their guard, rushed towards it, kneeling down to look at the face, and finding it unrecognisable through decomposition, snatched at the right hand of the corpse, and exclaiming—"Holy Virgin, it is my brother!" sprang up, and held out a ring to her father, naming the names of William and Louise inscribed on it, and a flaming heart between them.

After the first outburst of grief, the girl soon attained to a remarkable degree of outward composure; though there was certainly something overstrained and excited about it; and it was often interrupted by almost convulsive gestures, wringing of the hands, and deep-drawn sobs. However, it was such as enabled her to give all the orders she deemed necessary.

Agreeably to her directions, the corpse was taken to an out-building near the house, to which Loubette made her escape as soon as she had with inconceivable celerity prepared everything against the arrival of guests.

The old father appeared quite broken down, and almost childish with grief and horror; and, with lamentable groans, and unconnected cries, he meekly allowed himself to be led back to the arm-chair in his own room.

Either by the shot, or by the sort of presentiment or instinct which never fails to draw people to a place where a calamity has occurred, even before any definite tidings of it can have had time to reach them, a number of the country people of the neighbouring district were soon collected. Loubette was now busily occupied ; for, according to the popular custom, which makes a death, as well as a wedding or a christening—joy and sorrow alike—a pretext for eating and drinking, she had to provide both food and liquor, during which task she seemed to be struggling rather with anxiety than grief. Old Jerome welcomed each arrival with loud lamentations, which did not, however, interfere with his activity in passing round the jug.

As soon as Loubette had attended to her guests, and especially seen that the gendarmes were favourably placed as regarded the circulation of the cider-jug and the brandy pitcher, she hurried out again, and placed at the threshold of the little out-house, where lay the corpse, covered with a coarse linen cloth, two lighted candles, which were not rendered superfluous by the dawning light—for it was a dark corner enough.

The maiden was seated at the entrance with her head covered, and, as one neighbour after another came in, she appeared neither to see nor hear, and kept all at a distance by the violence of her emotion ; so that even those who would fain have taken a nearer look at the body, refrained from passing her to do so. Each fresh comer was contented with a hasty glance and a murmured prayer, and then withdrew.

After a while, the aged shepherd presented himself, a venerable form, that seemed rather to belong to other times.

“ *This also comes in the train of old age,*” he said in a half whisper, as he remained standing close to Loubette. “ The

son of the house, whose birth I commemorated, lies dead upon the bier, and the daughter sits weeping at the threshold!"

"God is proving our faith and patience, Master Jacques," replied the girl, looking up, as if struggling with contending purposes, and then, deeply moved, looked sadly in the old man's face, as he continued his wailings.

He placed his broad hand upon her head, as if to bless her; but his lamentations only increased her grief, for he spoke of the virtues of the deceased, who was evidently an object of affection to the whole neighbourhood. At length, groaning deeply, he shaded his face with his hands, and the few large tears that trickled slowly over his furrowed cheeks, seemed as though wrung by the greatness of his agony from fountains that had long been dry. He now made a movement towards the corpse, and, at first, Loubette appeared inclined to hinder his advance, but checking herself, she muttered in an undertone—"The gray-head will not betray us!" and followed him with looks of earnest attention.

He lifted the cloth that covered the face, but let it fall again immediately. There was no trace of identity; and the spectacle revealed by the uncertain light was one of horror. The pet sheep, which had accompanied the old man, and at first attentively sniffed the air around the corpse, now turned unconcerned away—a great offence in the eyes of old Jerome.

"I have thought more highly of the beast than it deserved," he said sullenly. "It is no better than the children of men! Should you not recognise your master's son, living or dead—even though his features be disfigured? But such is the way of the world—to have no memory for the absent and the dead!" And so saying, he withdrew, accompanied by the black sheep, which looked half ashamed, half surprised at his reproof.

The brigadier, finding I had studied the law, had asked me

to visit the body, and to draw up the *procès-verbal* of the finding of the corpse. Berand offered to assist me, as he had experience in such matters.

On the discovery of a *corps malheureux*—as a body whose manner of death is suspicious or doubtful is termed in this country—it frequently happens that the next of kin devolve the duties of preparing it for burial on an official styled the *grave-digger of the lost*, who is seldom a person of good repute, although the pay is excellent. Master Fait-tout seemed, nevertheless, accustomed to the work; and his help was very acceptable, for it was no pleasant task; and I wrote down what he dictated in answer to my inquiries.

On a sudden, as he was busied with the right arm, he burst into a loud exclamation of astonishment.

“What is the matter?” I cried.

“What is the matter!” he replied softly, coming nearer than was agreeable to me; “what do you see on this arm?”

“I see a tattooing mark, such as you were making at the inn at Marans.”

“Just so: the *grand-piece*—the altar, the lily, the cross, and a cipher. Now, except the lad on whom I etched it this morning, there is only one in all Lower Poitou who has the *grand-piece* on his arm; and that is, or was—not Guillaume Blaisot, but Pierre Sauvage, called the well-reputed, who was drowned a week ago, no one knew where, or how, and now”—

A half-suppressed scream prevented the completion of the sentence, and on looking round, we saw Loubette standing erect at the entrance, pale, and with dishevelled hair and flaming eyes, and her arm stiffly extended.

“Come hither, maiden!” he exclaimed, “your brother is alive! At least, this is no more he, than it is the Pope of Rome.”

But her emotion was at first too great for words ; and when she did speak, the accents were not those of joy, but of anguish and terror—

"On thy life—on thine everlasting salvation, say not another word ! And who allowed you to meddle with the dead ? what business have you here ?" she added with a deep groan, at the same time approaching him.

I quieted her with a few words of explanation, and an assurance that she might trust me. She grasped my hand, but cast a look of suspicion on my assistant. The latter, after a short pause, during which he displayed more feeling than was his wont, exclaimed—

"Now I see it all ! You knew that it was not Guillaume ?"  
She nodded assent.

"You are a brave lass, and I understand the game ; and may the deuce take me if I meddle, or mar ! I've no such liking for the bloodhounds, especially since 'the glorious days' in Paris yonder. So, my word upon it, I'm silent."

"Now I know the meaning of the bird-call," said I to Loubette ; "a signal that Guillaume was there with the corpse, was it not ?"

Again she nodded, and whispered, faintly smiling—

"He had most fortunately seen it lying in the mud and slime at the border of a little creek two hours ago, and had arranged it all with me. He is in concealment, while he is supposed to be dead, and the hue and cry is thus stopped. He hovers about here, as though Louise had bewitched him, and declares that he must see and speak to her yet once more." She turned again to Berand—

"You keep our secret ?" she said, looking earnestly at him, and holding out her hand.

He was about to grasp it, when he suddenly drew back, and exclaimed—

"Not so fast! Your fine brother, then, was the yellow dwarf with the hollow cough, and the corpse in his White Boat, who gave me such a fright as he chased me on the water?—No, that was too much—that's not to be forgiven! To make such a fool of me, and terrify me, like a child with a scarecrow! We'll see what the brigadier says to that game!"

I strove to appease him; but, unluckily, another weight dropped into the wrong balance.

"No, no," said he; "what a fool I should have been! The Sauvages have offered fifty pounds for the body of their son, and I may as well have the reward as any one else."

He was rushing out, but she stood in the doorway, and placing both her hands on his shoulders, and looking at him with sharp and earnest gaze, while her cheeks glowed with the excitement of her situation, she said, in a calm, but harsh and determined voice—

"Look well to yourself, wooden-leg: you have a choice to make. Are we in future to be friends or foes? Give me your word that you will say no more than you are asked, and from this hour you have a home in the house of the Blaisots—and you know the value of such a home to you and the like of you. Or say but a word, make but a sign—a gesture that may involve peril to my brother, and you have Loubette Blaisot for your deadly enemy,—and Loubette keeps her word for good and for evil. If *you* know it not, ask throughout Lower Poitou; and then, old man, ask yourself whether it can bring you either honour or profit in this country to betray a loyal Vendean to the gendarmerie? Guillaume is *lost* if he is not dead! Do you understand? As to the promise of the Sauvages, the Blaisots can fulfil it as well."

A host of conflicting feelings was struggling in the man's breast. It was mortified vanity alone that had caused him

to swerve from his original friendly resolution ; and thus—when I told him that if he did not himself represent his fright as a mere idle joke, in order to justify his treacherous betrayal of the young Blaisot, no one in the country would for a moment doubt the fact of a spectral appearance, or regard his terror as otherwise than perfectly natural—he was pacified, and able to estimate Loubette's promised gratitude, as well as her threatened vengeance, at their proper value. He now put his hand into that which she again held out—

“ Done !—I keep counsel.”

It was indeed high time that we came to an understanding, for during the discussion all the neighbours had withdrawn, and the brigadier had called twice ; and scarcely had we turned again towards the corpse, while Loubette resumed her place and attitude at the entrance, when he appeared, and inquired if the deposition were not yet ready, as it was time he should be setting out. I hastily wrote the concluding words, and handed the document to him. He scarcely looked at it ; and it was evident that the cider had done its work. Calling his men together, he departed with them and old Jerome, to make his deposition before the nearest magistrate. The old shepherd would fain have taken another look at the corpse, but this Loubette prevented.

“ He knows nothing of it,” she whispered in my ear, shrugging her shoulders, and shaking her head significantly.

No sooner had the tread of the gendarmes and the clang of their weapons died away in the distance, than Loubette, who had been intently listening, sprang to the back-door, and twice repeated the bird-call that I had heard at the beginning of the evening. After a few minutes, I heard her speaking with some one, and, in company with a young peasant, she walked into the room, to which, unable any longer to bear the neighbourhood of the corpse, I had betaken myself.

Fait-tout now proved his right to his name, by undertaking to dig a grave in the garden, and to superintend the interment of the deceased, by which the gendarmes, as well as the neighbours, asserted that he had sought his own death, and had thus forfeited all claim to Christian burial.

As Loubette came in leading her brother, the likeness between them was very striking ; and those traits which took from her the softness of womanly attractiveness, rendered him a type of manly beauty. He was an active, well-looking fellow, in spite of the hardships that he had recently endured, while he had been wandering about like a criminal, or a baited wolf.

On seeing me, he retreated a step, and put his hand in his vest, as if seeking a weapon, but Loubette soon reassured him.

When the first greetings were over, and he had offered me a few words of thanks, Loubette interrupted us, reminding him that it was time to refresh himself.

"For you cannot stay here," she added with a heavy sigh ; and for a moment, it appeared that the struggle of her full heart was about to find relief in tears. She rallied, however, and resumed her usual calmness of bearing ; it was as though hers were a life of action, not of emotion.

And yet with what motherly tenderness she now ministered to her brother ! carefully appropriating to him his place, his cup, his spoon ; anxious to give him yet once more the full impression of home. It was touching to see him fold his hands in prayer before he cut the bread.

"It is the first of the new wheat," said Loubette ; "I would not use any till you were with us."

"God bless thee, my sister ! I praise Him that He has permitted me to taste again the corn of our paternal fields for the last time," he added slowly, and with a deep-drawn sigh.

He however turned to the table and set to in good earnest,

as though he were making a meal that might carry him through more than one day. Between whiles, he asked a hundred questions about all the little matters that had occurred in field and stable during his absence; and in the interest of these domestic details, both seemed to have forgotten the perilous circumstances in which he was placed. I was compelled to remind him that if there were nothing more to be apprehended than the return of his father, the meeting with him must be avoided, as he was not in the secret. When Guillaume was away, he might know all with safety. At the same time, I offered to take him with me to Marans, from whence he could readily get across the country. It was so early, that we ran but little risk of meeting neighbours on the road, and in case of a straggler or two, he could contrive to hide his face.

He accepted the proposal, and slowly arose from his seat in the home of his youth.

"God's will be done! but it is hard for a son to shun his own father, and steal from his own home like a felon!" said he, as he grasped his staff, and took the bundle which his sister had prepared. She now turned aside, and, for the first time during this trying scene, her strong mind gave way beneath the storm of her feelings. She covered her head, and sobbed as though her heart were breaking. He stood undecided, and struck his stick against the floor. She made a strong effort, turned towards her brother, and, cutting a small slice from the loaf, she made the sign of the cross on it, then kissed it, and put it in his vest. She then grasped his hand, and looked imploringly at me. I understood her, and went out to look to the vehicle, and to leave the brother and sister alone to their bitter parting. She still strove against her weakness before the stranger.

In a few minutes he came out, and, without saying a word,

took his seat beside me in the car, gathered up the reins, and we were off. We drove on for about an hour and a half, when he suddenly halted, and said—

“Excuse me, sir, I will not detain you, but I have business here, hard by.”

I represented to him the risk he incurred, and expressed my surprise at his having any business that could hinder him for a quarter of an hour under such circumstances. It availed not, and he only entreated me to wait for him.

“Only ten minutes,” he exclaimed with the deepest emotion. “It is no business—it is but a house—a look. I cannot leave the country without once more”—

He pointed to a house overshadowed by trees, about a hundred paces from the spot.

“Louise?” I asked.

He coloured, and nodded assent, and then hurried towards the dwelling.

I fastened the horse to a tree, and followed him, to be at hand in case of trouble. He stood a while beneath a tree that was growing out of the hedge which surrounded the garden. The window of a projecting angle of the building was just opposite, and doubtless he had good reasons for choosing his post. The curtains were drawn, and the inmates of the house seemed buried in sleep. The distant village clock struck three, and I thought it high time that we were again on the road. I approached, and bade him be comforted, and take courage. His expression awed me; it was rather one of anger and passion than of sorrow, with the same stern fixed look that he had in common with his sister.

“One moment more!” he whispered softly. “She must know that I have been here, and then she will see how to settle it with her conscience. Yes; if she should learn that my corpse was found here!”

He laughed a bitter laugh, as he untied his cravat, and was about to fasten it to a branch which overhung the window.

"She will know it but too well!" he murmured.

Just at this moment, the cry of an infant was heard from the chamber. It had a wonderful effect on him, and changed his fiercer mood into one of complete prostration.

"She is a mother!" he cried. "I did not know it; Loubette should not have concealed that from me. It is all over now! and God forbid that I should bring terror to a mother!"

He let go the bough, which swung back against the window, and fastened the cravat round his neck; and in a few seconds, was seated by my side, lost in thought, and rapidly urging forward the horse on the road to Marans.

He drew up at the Bridge of Vix, and declared that his route now lay in a different direction. I offered him the charge of a little farm in Touraine, if he would let me know where to find him. He was evidently grateful for my sympathy, but declined the offer, saying—

"It can't be; I must live as the rest do. To manage a farm properly, I must have a wife, and I could not think of that. Man must labour, in the quietness and the peace of his heart and of his life, and that I cannot do. I should never see a gendarme without thinking that he was seeking me."

"You are dead for the gendarmes, Guillaume, and for all the world except Loubette and me," I replied half jestingly. But the words made a painful impression on him.

"It were perhaps the best thing that could happen for me if it were true," he rejoined gloomily. But recovering himself quickly, he imparted to me his plan, which was to seek a home with some friends in the Talmond country. I made some inquiries as to his means of subsistence; but he was shy, and broke off the conversation abruptly, saying that he

had still far to travel, and that people were coming in sight along the road from Marans. He was right; and we had scarcely time for a brief farewell, and a hearty grasp of each other's hand, when he was lost in the thicket, and I saw him no more. But among the bodies of those who were shot by the gendarmerie in the slight rising that soon afterwards took place in La Vendée, on the appearance there of the Duchess de Berri, that of Guillaume Blaisot was recognised.

## THE TREASURE-SEEKER.

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TRADITIONS of enchanted treasures, still obtainable by enchantment, are as common among the people of France as anywhere else. One of the most detailed of these traditions has maintained itself in *Les Pays des Basques*. It is often narrated by the shepherds who tend their flocks around the sources of the Gave, whose confluence in the plains forms the Adour.

Long before the days of Julius Cæsar, there was a magician who, riding on a tamed dragon, contrived to reach the rock where Debrua, the Evil Spirit, had his abode. He wound a magic chain seven times about him, and forced him to reveal the nature of the talisman which insured possession of all earthly power and earthly enjoyment. Debrua gave him the information required. In order to obtain every wish of his heart, he had but to conquer the saffron-coloured fly that appeared every evening in a mountain-pass of the Pyrenees which he named. In order to catch the fly, he was to weave a net of the three hairs whose roots were nearest the brain, having previously prepared them with sweat and blood. The

enchanter followed these directions, caught sight of the saffron-coloured fly, and followed it seven days and seven nights over rocks and through thorns, on which he left not only shreds of his garments, but even of his skin and his flesh. At last the fly settled upon the roof of a cow-keeper's hut, where he could not reach it (the reason of this is not told us); and as he had no other method of dislodging the insect, he set fire to the hut. Then the saffron-coloured fly flew off again; and he continued to follow, till at last it lighted upon a fennel-plant. Again he found himself unable to reach the object of his pursuit, for fennel is inimical to all enchanters. While he was standing in dismay, a young shepherd, who was pasturing his flocks in those regions, chanced to see the beautiful insect, caught it in his cap, and was about to carry it home with him. At this the magician was enraged: he followed the boy, slew him, and obtained at last the saffron-coloured fly; but before he could seize it in the proper way, it gave his hand such a sting, that the whole remainder of his life was poisoned in consequence. He became richer than the *Labinas*, or fairies of the Gave; but he fell sick, as those do who are devoted by their enemies to the blessing of St. Sequaire, which dries them up. And at last he died—as if the very core of his heart had been stung through and through.

Now, Brittany and the bordering district of Maine are also rich, not only in fragments and traces of traditions which are less fantastic, it is true, than the one we have just related, having for the most part a Druidical air about them, but even up to our own time, practical attempts to obtain such enchanted treasures are common there. The shepherds of the Pyrenees, on their part, never think of making search, as the very use of gold is unknown to several of them.

There are many places, it is true, where the only evidence

in favour of the existence of buried treasures consists in the local superstition about them; but there are many others, again, which possess such strong presumptive evidence of the fact, that the higher forms of mammon-worship in our own day have not disdained to concur in popular and superstitious researches.

One of these spots is a hill, or high mound of earth, between Le Mans and Mamers, called by the peasants "La Motte d'Yvé," but officially named Mount Jallus. Here, in olden times, the English held a strong position, which they only evacuated after the peace of Bretigny. Upon that occasion, being unable to carry off with them the long-gathered and costly spoils of the whole country round, they are said to have buried them here.

Since then, numberless attempts to dig out these treasures have been made in numberless parts of the hill; and these diggings have been more or less deep, according to the means possessed by those who, having been stung by the saffron-coloured fly, have sought their fortune here. The neighbouring village, St. Cosme, is avowedly the head-quarters of the treasure-seekers, and was especially adapted to their reception. But of late, when even English companies, and masculine as well as feminine notabilities of the July government, have taken up the matter, there are comforts to be found in the village inns which make it very possible to spend one's money—if not usefully, at least pleasantly enough. Magnetism, too, has played its part here. The father of a well-known actress followed the directions of a somnambulist in his search for treasures—and, indeed, with greater success than any hitherto obtained. It is true that he sunk some thousand dollars in the speculation, and in a few days received in return five old copper coins and three rusty nails! That did not, however, prevent his imitators from seeking the same spiritual

counsel ; and a somnambulist is now one of the indispensable personages connected with the digging operations, which have since that time been carried on at considerable outlay.

In the autumn of 1844, I accepted the challenge of a friend to visit these works, as results of antiquarian interest, at least, appeared by no means improbable.

We were already drawing near to the end of our journey, when, on the slope of one of the shafts near the roadside, we remarked a man lying fast asleep. He wore the peasant dress of the district, and was very neatly and cleanly attired. Instead of a stick, he held in his hand a little spade—one of those used in mole-catching. My companion recognised the sleeper, and said, as he pointed him out to me—

“ That is one of the most remarkable specimens of our country-people. Jean Marie is something between a charlatan and a sorcerer. He knows all sorts of secret remedies, and sells talismans. He cures all manner of diseases, both of men and beasts, exorcises reptiles, and discovers water-springs. He sells love-potions to the damsels round, and contrives to transpose himself from place to place as quick as thought. He does business with all the farmers far and wide, and every year buys an acre of land. No doubt he is now on one of his rounds, for he has his magic pack with him, I see.”

The stranger had in fact a leathern bag, or pouch, open on his knees : he seemed to have been rummaging in it when sleep overtook him. Curiosity impelled us to draw nearer, to investigate his mysterious store ; but he woke up, and at first looked round him with terror and suspicion. But as soon as he recognised my companion, he at once became composed ; and having hurriedly concealed his knapsack, he stood up and greeted us. He was still in the prime of life and strength ; but the expression of his face was rather that of a Norman

than of an inhabitant of Maine—more expressive and more jovial, though of equal cuniling.

It so happened that he was going the same way as we were; and as he stood upon tolerably familiar terms with my friend, whom I shall name Charles, he was easily persuaded to set off with us. His next destination was the farm of the fat Francis, as he was called—who was also, as it appeared, a public character in these parts. As we were starting, a small article dropped out of the cunning man's store, which I picked up and returned to him. He thanked me, and said, not without some embarrassment, that it was a specimen of corn which he wished to show to Father Francis.

"Is it not rather corn prepared for the mercurial test, old sorcerer?" asked Charles with a laugh.

Jean Marie smiled, and shrugged his shoulders without answering. It was unmistakeable that he himself *doubted* as to the reality of his own arts and his own wisdom.

Charles then gave me the following description of the way in which the price of corn is foretold.

Twelve grains of corn are, with all manner of hocus-pocus, laid in a row upon the hearthstone, before a very hot fire. Each grain signifies a month in the year, and according to the way in which the increasing heat causes some of them to bound backwards or forwards, so will the rise or fall in the price of corn be.

I observed that the custom seemed connected with Druidical superstitions—an idea to which the heathenism of Jean Marie seemed to incline.

"Wisdom is the gift of the ancients," he quietly replied.

"This sort of wisdom comes very near that of the Evil One!" remarked Charles.

"And what of that?" rejoined the other, with a smile. "The really humble are those who do not deny that he is

wiser than they. The devil is always treated like a beggar ; everybody barks after him in order to pass himself off as a good dog."

We soon reached the Mount Jallus, where our way diverged from that of the devil's champion. Our expectations concerning the diggings were much disappointed ; for either there really was nothing to show, or else we were not trusted. The leading engineer, to whom we had an introduction, was not on the spot, and so we soon continued our way to St. Cosme, where we hoped to find him.

But there too we missed him ; and the aspect of the village was not calculated to lessen our vexation. It was a genuine French nest ; and to those who know the meaning of that phrase, it says all that need be said. Owing to the utter absence of any other object which could inspire the least interest, or afford the least pleasure, we bestowed our attention upon a travelling tinker, who was carrying on his trade opposite our inn, and whose whole appearance had something picturesque and romantic ; provided that such epithets be not denied to the generality of Teniers' paintings, and to others of the Flemish school.

After he had placed his furnace in the proper position, he began to make his dinner of a piece of black bread and a couple of onions. But suddenly he started, sprang up, and ran off into a by-street, which was cut short by a low wall. Here he stood for some time leaning against the wall ; then jumping on it, he looked round about him in evident excitement. At length he returned, downcast and murmuring to himself. We had been throughout unable to discover any cause for this sudden emotion.

Just at that moment our host entered, and we asked him who the man was, and what was the matter with him. The host shook his head, as he answered that no one could exactly

tell, unless it were the devil. From the man himself, whose name was Claude, no answer whatever was to be got as to his family or his circumstances. Anyhow, he was a vagabond; and owing to his ceaseless wandering about the country, he had had the name of *le Rouleur* given him. One thing, however, was certain—whenever the diggings on Motte d'Yvé were set agoing, he was sure to be there, and for this reason people have supposed him to be a treasure-seeker, and half a sorcerer.

We determined that we would try our luck with the tinker, and going over to where he was, we tried to make ourselves as agreeable as we possibly could. But he remained gruff and monosyllabic; either looked down at his work, or cast sidelong and suspicious glances from his deep-set black eyes at us. And yet his answers always had a meaning at bottom.

"You must find it hard to be so long from home at this season of the year?" I suggested, after making a few less direct observations.

"He who is alone in the world is at home everywhere," replied he with a bitter smile.

"Then you really are always on the move?"

"The poor must go wherever he can find sun and food."

"But when sickness or old age comes?"

"Then one does as wolves do—one lies down in a corner and makes an end of it."

So we went on for a while; and Charles, who piqued himself not a little upon his advocate's skill in cross-questioning, did not make much further progress.

At last, it chanced that I, taking it for granted that the tinker, like all of his trade, came from Auvergne, began to speak to him about that province.

"I am no Auvergnat," said he drily.

"Where, then, do you come from?"

At first he was silent, and then muttered, "Berri."

That word showed that we had won the game, for Charles himself is a "Berrichon;" and he played the part so well, expressing, in the purest and most horrible *patois* of Issoudan, so much delight at meeting a countyman,\* that old Claude's frosty demeanour could hold out no longer, especially when he found that my friend and he were still more nearly related, as being both of the same district of Morvan.

It was not long before we were all three sitting around a bottle of genuine "Berri," which completely unloosed the poor fellow's tongue, and afforded us abundant explanation of his strange conduct, which rooted entirely in the popular traditions about treasures and treasure-seekers. With him tinkering was but a pretext to disguise his own special vocation, which held out to him, as an inevitable result, the obtaining of countless riches by digging up the treasures watched over by dragons and monsters in those *Men-hirs* and other monuments, in which Brittany and the neighbouring Celtic provinces are so rich. And, moreover, he was a by no means raw professor of mysterious lore; but he had, with the help of some old books, devised a very complicated system of popular magic, alchymy, and astrology, in all which he believed as devoutly as in his own existence.

The chief points of his creed regarding treasures were as follows. There are treasures of three different kinds: the first belong to the Evil One, whom he always called *le vilain*; the second to the dead; the third to spirits, to fairies, and to such of the defunct as he designated by the expression of the Summoned, because they were appointed to a corporeal

\* The tie of fellow-provincial is much more warmly acknowledged in France—and not amongst the peasantry alone—than one could have expected from the centralization of the whole state.

resurrection. The first comprised all precious stones, as well as the nobler metals, which had not seen the face of heaven for more than a hundred years ; the second were those over which a living being had been slain, and over which his spirit kept watch ; the third were treasures which had been hidden by fairies, spirits, or sorcerers. The discovery and the raising of these three different kinds must be carried on by different ways and means. With the Evil One, there was no other way of dealing than by entering into a binding contract, concluded upon a cross road, and at midnight, after Master Robert —this, it seemed, was another of the Great Enemy's names—had been solemnly and specially invited, with all the ceremonies necessary in such a case.

The treasures existing under the guardianship of departed spirits are more rare, and are, besides, most difficult to obtain. The living creature who first touches them must inevitably die, either at once, or in the course of the year. The great point, therefore, in this case, is first to procure rest for the troubled spirit, and to obtain for it an entrance into the realm of souls, that so it may be able to forsake its post.

The third class of treasures is the most accessible. An accident, a happy meeting with one of the possessors or watchers in a gracious mood—whether these be genii, fairies, or dragons—will often avail to open out endless wealth to some fortunate mortal. Magic and the art of conjuration, it is true, offer other means through the proper use of which a few favoured ones may with greater toil attain their end. But such science is only possessed by a few, and is fast becoming more and more rare. One way, indeed, of breaking the spell which renders treasures invisible, is to induce a priest to say a mass backwards ; but then it is scarcely possible in these days to get an ordained minister to commit such a sacrilege.

But what the people call "*la trêve de la nuit de Noël*"

(the truce of Christmas-night), affords the best chance of all. And on this point the would-be wonder-worker adhered as implicitly to the old, partly Druidical, partly Christian, traditions current, as in the remainder of his creed he was content to follow the grossest follies or impostures of all known or unknown Black Art ; or, perhaps, I should rather say, to follow his own wild fancies.

The night then, when the Saviour of the world, the Prince of Peace, was born, or, at all events, the hour of His birth, affords to the whole world a sort of a "truce of God." All laws and all strife, all enmity and opposition between the visible and invisible worlds, are done away with for that hour Love and Peace alone hold sway over the universe. There is no wickedness, no transgression, no punishment ! The infinite burden of anguish laid upon the world, is for a season removed, and it draws a long breath of ecstasy because of this deliverance, which does not, however, extend beyond midnight During this short respite, the petrified spirits of the *Menhirs* and other Druidical remains, rise and hurry to the lakes to quench their thirst, and to bathe therein. So the treasures that they guard, remain open and unwatched. It is the same with the dragons and serpents, which lay aside their heavy carbuncle crowns, that they may drink of the running brooks The evil spirits have neither power nor will to injure. Even animals throw off the curse to which they have been subjected by the guile of the serpent ; and those who are wont to fly from or devour each other, now meet and associate harmlessly and trustingly. The most hidden clefts and lowest depths of the earth open out, the mountains tremble with joy and display all their treasures and splendours, as in spontaneous and loving subjection. The *called* may profit by these moments, but woe to him who has not carried his booty to some place of security before the next hour strikes. The firing of the cannon which

announces the termination of the midnight mass, is the sign for the renewing of the great conflict between the visible and invisible worlds. The evil spirits return to their posts, and should they find the treasure-seeker still there, he is given up to their power till the day of judgment.

Poor Claude had now lived twenty years in the firm hope of profiting by this interval of peace, and had repeated his attempts every Christmas-night, now here and now there, throughout the whole country, without ever being disconcerted by their want of success, and by the utter absence of any one experience, any one appearance which could confirm his pre-conceived notions. With steadfast patience he counted the days till the next Christmas-night should come round.

"To-day again," continued he, after a pause, speaking rather to himself than to us, and having indeed, as it appeared, completely forgotten our presence in his excitement; "to-day again I have had a sign."

"When you ran into the little street, eh?" interposed I, thoughtlessly enough. He started, looked at us suspiciously, bit his lips, and said in a changed voice—

"So, then, the gentlemen observed me? Indeed, indeed—well then, you must have seen too, whether it really did turn up the street or not?"

"What do you mean—it?"

"Oh! perhaps the gentlemen believe that they have got hold of a child, and are asking it its catechism!" he now exclaimed, with an expression of the greatest bitterness, as he jumped up. All our attempts to calm him, to regain his confidence, to induce him to speak, were perfectly vain. It was only by the offer of a reward, which was really a considerable one for him, that he was persuaded to act as our guide to a neighbouring village, where we wished to visit some antiquities, and which, moreover, lay in the direction that, as we had

already ascertained, he meant to take this very evening. I hoped to be able to regain our lost ground with this singular and half-distracted man.

But my hopes were disappointed—Claude remained sullen and silent. After a while we reached a solitary farm-house, which Claude announced to be that of the Fat Francis, whose name we had already heard. A party of peasants in the immediate neighbourhood, busy with rakes, spades, and shovels, were very zealous, and loud about their work. One of them held in his hand a fork-shaped hazel-rod, a divining-rod in short, and was giving directions, and answering questions with dignified bearing, and solemn gestures. As we drew nearer, we recognised Jean Marie.

“The mole-catcher!” exclaimed Charles with a laugh.

“Not at this moment!” put in Claude ironically; “he is playing a higher part just now; he has Aaron’s rod in his hand, and seems to be looking for treasures or—water, the ignorant, unbelieving blockhead that he is!”

I beckoned to him to be silent, and, hidden behind some bushes, we were able to see the busy group quite near.

“The right twig gold, the left iron—if both move, water;” said Jean Marie, as he walked up and down with his divining-rod. The peasants followed him about, with every token of highly-wrought expectation, and deep wonder and reverence, not unmixed with a shade of fear, for the marvels that were to appear. At last, and close to where we were standing, the left twig was seen to move; and after the labourers had, at the sorcerer’s bidding, proceeded to dig to the depth of about two feet, something was heard to ring beneath the spade, while he stooped down, and lifted up in triumph a horse-shoe, which the bystanders passed from hand to hand in amazement. Jean Marie then went on to a place where flags and rushes grew amongst the bushes.

"Dig here!" said he exultingly; "here is water!"

And after the peasants had again dug about two feet deep, a spring of tolerably clear water did indeed gush forth.

"To hide and then find a horse-shoe, to discover water where rushes grow, that is the extent of his art," muttered Claude, with an expression of conscious superiority, while we advanced and saluted the water-finder. Jean Marie was evidently very unpleasantly affected by the presence of Claude, though he did not venture to show it openly.

It was evident, indeed, that the ragged tinker domineered over the well-to-do quack. He answered some of Claude's ironical remarks in a conciliatory and humble manner, but it was plain that he felt decidedly relieved when we urged our guide to go on again, and thus avoided a serious dispute between the rival magicians.

But Jean Marie's tactics were evidently complicated to a degree that we vainly tried to unravel—for, in a short time, we heard him calling after us; and when, after a rapid run, he came up with us, it was to say that as our road passed quite close by his house, he should be exceedingly obliged if Master Claude would undertake a few repairs for him. It is possible that he wished to humble the man whom he felt to be his superior in mystic lore, by calling upon him thus to practise his lowly trade.

But be that as it might, we had soon reason to be thankful for this political measure. For scarcely had we retraced our steps for half a mile, and by a cross road approached so near Jean Marie's dwelling—they call such hedged-in portions of land *Closuries*—as to be able to discern its roof beneath the surrounding fruit-trees, than all at once the thunder-storm which had been gathering ever since noon, burst upon us with such violence, that even in the short way that yet remained, we got wet to the knees and were truly glad to find under

Jean Marie's roof; a shelter from the hail and rain, and a cheerful fire at which to dry and warm ourselves.

We, or rather our host, were welcomed by an unfortunate idiotic, wild-looking, grown-up, but dumb female. She was sitting upon the threshold, her tangled hair over her face, and her eyes closed. But she heard us at some distance, jumped up, and on seeing first of all only my friend and myself—the two treasure-seekers walking together behind—she ran at us with threatening gestures and fierce sounds. But she had hardly discovered Jean Marie when her whole being changed, and she hastened to him, jumped several times around him, laid her head on his breast, ran on before him, rubbed up to him, and finally preceded him into the house. There she continued to make the strangest gestures, and to utter sounds that resembled the joyful whining of a faithful dog.

Jean Marie introduced her to us as his sister Martha, and returned her oft-repeated manifestations of delight at his return much more kindly than I should have expected from him. He praised her much to us as a trustworthy, and able guardian of the premises in his absence, careful and attentive to her brother's comforts, and to all things and persons which he had a value for.

"A mother always thinks her last child beautiful, and I have no one related to me now in all the world, except my poor Martha," observed he, as if apologetically; "and when I come home in the evenings, it is something to have a human being there, who loves and welcomes me. And we understand each other capitally, in many more ways than you could believe."

It soon appeared that the continuance of our journey, or our return to St. Cosme, were alike out of the question. All the fields and meadows, roads and paths, were under water; the little brook, that ran past the house, roared down the

valley like a mountain-torrent, and soon swept along in its course fragments of the bridges it had destroyed. Twilight too had closed in, and, to cut the matter short, we could not hope, before morning broke, to take a hundred steps in any direction without considerable danger. So we thankfully accepted the invitation of Jean Marie, who cordially offered us all he had to give, namely, a fire, bread, wine, and some clean straw for the night. We accordingly sat down to table comfortably enough. But all our attempts to get the tinker to thaw again proved perfectly useless. Jean Marie, on the contrary, had almost regained his cheerful, confident tone, and was, if not much more communicative, at least a great deal more talkative than his rival. Poor Martha crouched down on the ground beside her brother, and laid her head upon his knee, like a tired child. Every now and then he gave her a mouthful, and whenever he appeared to forget her, she reminded him of her presence by a low and gentle whine, just as a little dog might have done. At times, she raised her head and looked steadfastly at her brother, and then a lightning flash of conscious affection would shine out from her expressionless, rolling, light-blue eyes. Jean Marie seemed to take pleasure in speaking of her, and relating how, though certainly weak in body and mind, she had by no means been idiotic up to her twelfth year ; nay, that on several occasions, her love for her mother and her brother had wonderfully exalted her mental and bodily energies ; but a fire, which had consumed her parents' house by night, had so shaken her whole being, that she had become what we saw her now. Yet she had still some intervals of clearer consciousness, and he went on hoping if not for a cure, yet at all events, for some alleviation of this heavy trial.

Claude had been all this time busy with a couple of iron pots which were given him to tinker. He had partaken very

moderately of the repast set before him, and had taken no part in the conversation, in which the "Rat-catcher," as he contemptuously called our host, had displayed a very good, perhaps indeed the best side of his character. Every now and then Claude fixed his gaze, as if unconsciously, upon the idiot, without however a trace of the interest and sympathy which the country people are wont to show towards this afflicted class of beings, whom they call "Holy Innocents." After some time he rose, went to the door, looked out at the weather, packed up his implements in his basket, and took hold of his old hat and new cudgel.

" You are surely not going further to-night ?" asked Jean Marie.

" About two good miles further," was the reply.

" If the son of your father is in his right mind, he will put up with my straw, and not risk his neck on"—

" The son of my mother has his own ideas on the subject, and knows what he is about," broke in his gloomy guest; and with a curt leave-taking he prepared to depart. Our host was evidently more occupied by curiosity as to the intentions of his mysterious and singular fellow-treasure-seeker, than offended by the incivility of his manner. Above all things, he seemed to dread any open rupture with him. He at once offered him the parting cup courteously enough. My friend laughingly expressed his good wishes for the traveller in the words of the prayer to St. Bon-sens : " God preserve you from the men of the court, the women of the city, and the wolves of the field."

" Well, the gentlemen may laugh as they will, but let me become a 'Normand'—and that would be no trifle to a good 'Manceau'—if I did not see yesterday a wolf, or something worse, near this cottage of mine. I ran for my gun and followed the creature along the hedge. Just as I was going to make a hole in its hide, it howled, and then I was perplexed

as to whether, after all, it might not be a dog, and I did not fire. And yet I had never in all my life seen a dog like it ; so I aimed again ; but in a moment it vanished, as if it was bewitched, as if the earth had swallowed it up, just at the foot of the great earth-mound behind the garden."

The tinker, who was just setting out, suddenly stood as still as if he had taken root, and listened with intense attention. He instantly put several rapid, low, and to us scarcely intelligible questions, as to the size and colour of the animal—stood silent for a moment, as if lost in thought, then put down his basket and sat down, brooding and mute, in a corner of the room. We had had our overtures repulsed already too often by the surly old fellow, so we took no further notice of him ; but Jean Marie contemplated him with growing curiosity and timid reverence. It was quite evident that he burned to try his luck, and question this master-sorcerer about his mysteries ; and the best preparation for this measure seemed, in his opinion, to be a frequent offer of the "fire-water," which he had taken out of a cupboard in the wall, to pour out the parting cup.

We were unwilling to be any longer in the way, and were, moreover, tired enough ; so we asked to be shown to the room where we were to pass the night. It opened out of the kitchen, or parlour, in which the two men were sitting. I left my door a little open, that I might watch them, for Claude's demeanour had made a great and disagreeable impression upon me, which my friend's jokes had no power to remove. I had certainly no fear about our own personal safety ; but I had a presentiment of something mysterious and horrible. However, my intention of watching soon subsided into deep and heavy sleep, and painful dreams. My last half-conscious impression was of an eager, low-toned conversation between the two treasure-seekers, who were sitting so close

together that their bent heads almost touched. I heard something said about the earth-dog which watches treasures, and then I dropped off to sleep. Again I thought I heard them speak of some sacrifice that would be necessary, as whoever touched the treasure first would be lost. The heads bent still nearer; Claude hissed something in the ear of Jean Marie, who started up as if horrified. I tried to rouse myself to greater attention, but it was in vain, for sleep utterly overcame me.

How long I slept I do not know; but I plainly heard a rustling at our door, and Jean Marie's voice, saying—

“They are asleep!”

“It's all the same,” answered another voice, and I heard the key turned.

Then Jean Marie called Martha, and the poor thing murmured, and stretched herself as she awoke; but no sooner had she recognised her brother's voice, than she sprang up with her loving little whine, and was ready to do anything that he might point out. After a few minutes' delay, the three set out together. At first, before I was thoroughly awake, I had the impression of a crime about to be perpetrated; but it soon occurred to me that there could be no real danger to Martha in any part that the stupid superstition of the two men might assign her. And yet there was something horrible in reflecting that the death of the poor idiot had been actually decreed in the mind and will of her brother, as the price to be paid for wealth. So, then, the tempter had prevailed over the best feeling of his nature, over the genuine affection he felt towards the helpless sister whose whole life seemed to consist of her love to him.

My first impulse had been to jump up and prevent the undertaking of these men, whatever it might be. Soon, however, succeeded another—the idle curiosity, or, to call it by a

milder name, the interest I took in this aspect of popular life, made me desirous to see where the thing would end. My intention was to let them go on, and then to creep after them with my comrade. I had not such a high notion of the old fortress in which we were shut up, as to suppose I could not force the lock from within ; and besides, I remembered having seen some iron tools in a corner of the room.

As soon as the footsteps and voices of the treasure-seekers had passed out of hearing, I jumped up, awoke my friend, and informed him of what I had heard. We soon set to work. But the task was more difficult than I had supposed, and we lost much time in spite of vigorous efforts, till at last we determined by the help of an iron bar, which we were fortunate enough to find, to lift the door off its hinges. When we got out we looked about us carefully, in order to find out the nearest way to the mound of earth, of which Jean Marie had spoken the preceding evening, and which was doubtless to be the scene of their great operations. The morning however was just beginning to break, cold and gray, and we felt uncertain which way to take.

Suddenly we heard a hollow crash, and then a piteous cry. We hurried in the direction whence it came, and had hardly taken two hundred steps when Jean Marie came to meet us, carrying his poor idiot sister in his arms. He was in a state of fearful excitement. "The old quarry !" he gasped out as he saw us. "We tried to widen the entrance. Martha, poor Martha ! the whole of it fell upon her ! make way, I tell you, make way !"

He rushed past us to the house. For a moment we doubted whether it might not be right to apprehend the tinker, as we suspected that a crime had been committed. But Jean Marie's cry for help determined us to hurry at once to him. We found him busied in carefully tending the poor faithful creature, but

himself in a state of increasing excitement. When we entered, he implored our assistance. Alas ! there was nothing to be done ! Martha lay upon the hearth, with a wide gaping wound in her head, and covered with blood, while her whole attitude showed that her limbs were fearfully shattered.

Our efforts and the administration of brandy and water, at length succeeded in rousing her for a moment from the state of torpor in which at first we had found her. She raised her head a little, and opened her eyes. Their glance had no longer a trace of idiocy—it conveyed the full expression of conscious, sorrowful love and deep anxiety. “Jean Marie!” she cried in a weak but perfectly distinct voice. When her brother heard her speak, he leaped up as though he had been struck on the breast with a red-hot iron. “Did you hear that?” exclaimed he, wringing his hands. “She has spoken,—now, it is all over with her!” In fact, she rapidly relapsed into a swoon ; her breath became fainter and fainter ; a few minutes longer and the death-convulsion shook her feeble frame, she groaned once more, moved her lips, tried to raise her head, and look towards the side, where her brother was sitting upon the hearth petrified with grief ; then, she sank back, and all was over.

What had we any longer to do there ? What help could we afford to the living or the dead ? Jean Marie did not even answer any of the short attempts at consolation, which we addressed to him. Like an image of the deepest woe and bitterest remorse, he sat by the corpse—his eyes riveted on it. He took no further notice of us than was implied in a hasty and imploring motion toward the door. We obeyed his mute request and went away, fully intending to send all necessary assistance from the nearest village.

We returned by the way we had come the day before. After a few minutes’ walking, we reached a place where the

road was covered with earth and stones. This, then, was evidently the old quarry where Martha had met with her death. We stood still for a moment, and saw a figure crawl out of a narrow opening, and, passing close by us, disappear in the thick brushwood beyond. We could not mistake the dark face, the piercing glance of the tinker. Yet we had no right, and no plea for detaining him. For the few expressions that Jean Marie had used touching the sad occurrence, proved that it had been owing to an accident, and not, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, to a crime.

"Has, then, the death of that harmless innocent been powerless to quench, for one moment, the superstition and thirst for gold in this man's heart?" I exclaimed, shuddering.

"On the contrary," replied my companion, "she was the very sacrifice who was to purchase for him the safe approach to the long-sought treasure."

We had had enough of treasure and antiquity-seeking for a long time to come, and returned past the Motte d'Yv  in much graver mood than that in which we had first seen it.



## THE GROACH AND THE KAKOUS.

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DURING the course of a journey upon business, that led me through ancient Brittany in 183-, I happened to leave Pontrieux rather late one evening, and to take a footpath that I was tolerably well acquainted with, hoping thus to reach Tréguier before sunset. But I had much miscalculated, and before I was half way it was already fast growing dark. In addition to this, a violent snow-storm came on just as I arrived on the barren *plateaux* that run along that part of the coast. As their steep though low banks of rock or earth are washed by the sea, it may well be conceived that the storms from the north or west, blowing as they do over a measureless expanse of ocean, rage over these *plateaux* with unresisted fury.

At first I felt a species of enjoyment in battling with the elements; but very soon the narrow path was ankle-deep with drifted snow, which almost threatened to cover me up, and at all events prevented my seeing two yards before me. It is true that the moon rose early; but the wild masses of fast-flying clouds, and the thick snow-fall, only confused one's

senses the more, seen through her unsteady light, so that I could hardly conquer a tendency to vertigo if I stood still for a moment, and relaxed the full stretch of my physical energies.

However, there were occasional pauses in the storm, as though it were taking breath for new outbursts of fury; and yet these short respites exercised no comforting influence over me. They were either broken by the howling of wolves, or by other less easily explained, and therefore more disquieting night-sounds of nature; or else the dashing of the waves, which the high wind had excited and for a time out-roared, or the rushing of a swollen stream, broke suddenly upon my ear, reminding me of the nearness of danger without enabling me to distinguish exactly the direction in which it lay. If I turned my back to the storm for the sake of an instant's repose, I soon lost every distinct trace of the path I ought to take. If I faced the wind again, that afforded me no certainty of being in the right way, for it kept shifting constantly from north to west.

Fortunately, a little footpath that I at last followed, led me down suddenly into a narrow dingle, into which the storm could not penetrate; and while it roared away over my head, I was able to take breath, and collect my scattered senses. By and bye, I observed at a distance of about a hundred yards, in a broader and lower part of the dingle, a few unsteady lights; and going towards them, I soon found myself at the door of a humble hut, which stood at the end of a poor little village, whose low and ancient church-steeple, lighted up by the moonbeam, was visible for a moment through the driving snow.

The door was only a lean-to; and on pushing it open and entering the cottage, I found myself in one of Brittany's spinning-rooms. About twelve women were sitting round a

bright fire, turning their spindles with great rapidity, and shortening the time now with talk, and now with song. Some sleeping children lay in a corner of the room. The seat best protected from smoke and draught was occupied by a young woman, who was suckling a baby, and singing the while a wailing nursery-song in an under tone.

At my entrance, every face was turned towards me with an expression of mingled anxiety and curiosity, to discover through the clouds of smoke, and by the fire's unsteady light, who it could be that was shaking off the snow from his coat, and standing stamping upon the threshold.

"God's blessing rest on all here present," said I, in conformity to the custom of the country.

"And on the stranger as well," answered the good woman of the house, rising, and advancing to meet me.

"There is a shroud over the heath, and even the wolves are unable to find out their lairs," I continued, as I approached the fire.

"Houses are for Christians," replied she, pointing to the warmest seat near the hearth, which was immediately ceded to me, while the women crowded together.

A long silence succeeded; for good manners in Brittany forbid that the guest be addressed first, or plagued with questions: people wait to hear what he may have to say. At length, having recovered a little from my fatigue, and got warm again, I inquired how far I still was from Tréguier.

"Three long miles and more," answered the countrywoman; "but the waters are out, and without a guide you could not get there safely even by daylight."

Upon my asking whether it would not be possible for me to procure a guide from the village, she replied with a deep sigh, which called forth more than one echo—

"Our husbands are at Terre-neuve, on board the St. Pierre."

"All of them?" said I in amazement.

"All, of course. Does not the strange gentleman then know that it is the custom here for all the men of a village to sail together if possible? We have been expecting them every day for the last eight days."

Some of the other women now began to speak all at once, in a half whisper, and in most melancholy tones, as follows:—

"God be with them! The ships from Brabet, from St. Brieux, have already returned a fortnight past; it is only the St. Pierre that is missing."

"And yet it is high time that our husbands should be back, for the winter sets in hard, and the dear time begins."

"Our little bit of spinning won't last us much longer, even if we were to spin till our fingers bled."

"Only ask poor Dinah how many measures of barley she still has in her chest for herself and her baby."

"And over and above that, she owes me for the milk she has had every day since the little one's birth."

"Dinah may well pray to God to grant a good haul of fish to the St. Pierre, to enable her to get out of her difficulties."

"Why, as for that, she ought to be very thankful that hitherto things have gone much better with her than she could have expected or deserved."

There was in the tones of the speakers, and indeed in their whole bearing towards the young woman, a something rather contemptuous, which surprised me. Dinah evidently felt it. She bent down over her child, and sobbed out—"I pray only that God may preserve my husband."

I now observed her more closely. In spite of the very poorest clothing, she made upon me the impression of great and rare beauty—at once proud and somewhat wild in character, and yet full of feminine softness and grace.

The women went on speaking of the ship, upon which all

their hopes hung, and of what they purposed to do in case it returned with a profitable cargo.

"I shall go to the town," said one, "and eat my fill for once of wheaten bread."

"My brother has promised me a silver ring," said another; "but I shall not have one under thirty francs."

"I will buy a couple of masses for the soul of my mother."

"I have vowed one to the honour of the holy St. Anna."

"And thou, Dinah," asked I, turning to the young woman, "what wilt thou do when thy husband returns?"

"I—I?" answered she, as if timid and embarrassed. "I will lay his child in his arms, and we shall be together."

At this moment, a cow, which occupied a partition at the back of the cottage, stretched her head out, and lowed three times very emphatically.

"Another stranger is coming here: the red cow knows what she is about," observed the housewife.

A moment later, we heard heavy steps outside, and then came a loud knocking, and a rough voice said—

"Is there any room in this house for the poor?"

"Anaik Timor!—the Groach!" exclaimed all the women at once, with an unmistakable expression of alarm and abhorrence. Dinah echoed the words after a moment's interval, and said, while she pressed her child still closer to her breast—"Anaik Timor! May God graciously preserve us!"

"Is there, then, no room for the poor in this house?" the rough voice again asked in a still harsher tone.

The housewife rose reluctantly and opened the door. In came a little old woman, with the most wretched snow-covered rags hanging about her, and exposing to view her thin, dark, and seemingly smoke-dried limbs. She carried on her shoulders a much-torn bag, out of which projected the neck of a bottle, the nature of whose contents it was easy to guess at.

Her long gray hair was stiff with snow and frost. She carried a long and strong cudgel in her hand. Her face was so covered with a net-work of deep wrinkles, that its original expression could hardly be traced. Only, her green-gray eyes showed mingled wickedness and cunning, and had an unsteady piercing look, which seemed the effect not alone of drink, but of insanity.

She remained standing in the middle of the room—if the covered space deserved the name—shook off the snow, stamped with her stick upon the floor, and threw threatening glances upon the circle around her.

“ It takes time, as it seems, and trouble to make up one’s mind to open the door to old Timor! And yet the weather outside is too bad to turn out a dog in,” said she, in a loud, sharp, screeching voice.

After some apology made by the good woman of the house, she continued—

“ So, then, you did not expect me? No, indeed, you never expect old Timor. What do you, sitting round your warm fire, with plenty to eat and drink, care for those who are freezing and hungering without? But patience, I say, it is not yet the end of all things, and who knows whose turn will come next?”

While she was putting her bag down, and finding herself a place near the fire, I asked some of the women about her; for though I knew what respect the country people in Brittany show to a beggar of this kind, yet there was a something about the threatening demeanour of this *uncanny* and wretched being that surprised me. My questions only received the following words in reply, and they were whispered in fear and trembling—

“ She is a Groach!—a witch—a wise woman, I mean.”

As the old woman moved towards the fire, she became

aware of my presence. For a moment she seemed rather dismayed by it; but she soon recovered herself, and said, in an almost mocking tone, while she fixed her piercing gaze upon me—

“Look you, now, a *Tud-gentil*—a nobleman!”

It is thus that this people are wont to call every townsman, or, as they say, every gentleman. I must here remark, that the women spoke to each other in the old Armorican dialect, taking it for granted that I did not understand it. To me, however, they spoke French as well as they could.

“A nobleman!” continued the old hag, with a grin; “fine clothes, watch, chain, ring, and all! Well, Joan Timor might have had them all too, if he had liked; and when he was alive, Anaik had no need to go about with the beggar’s staff, knocking at doors, and hearing the people within saying, ‘The old witch!—God be gracious to us!’”

She then began, as if in absence of mind, to hum an old song about the Plague of Elliant, while she cowered almost in the fire, till I really expected each moment to see her dry, black, and claw-like fingers begin to blaze.

She had for some time been looking askance at Dinah, who was evidently discomposed by this, and turned away, so as at least to shield her child from the malignant influence.

“So, then, Raven-eye,” suddenly screeched out the old woman, “thou too art here! How comes the rope-maker’s daughter amongst respectable women?”

The poor young wife grew pale; and I now understood the ungraciousness evinced towards her by the rest of the group. She belonged, then, to that unfortunate and despised race known to the people of Brittany as Kakous.\*

\* The Kakous of Brittany are doubtless etymologically the same as the Cagots of the South of France, and afford the same difficulties in the way of adequate historical explanation. We will content ourselves with suggesting that the terms Kakous and

"You are mighty proud, Dinah," the old witch went on ; "and all because a young fellow of pure blood has thrown himself away upon you, and you happen to be nursing a child of his at your breast. But I too have had husband and children, and now I am desolate and spurned by all the world. Wait a little, thou daughter of an accursed race ! This day year I foretold that this would be a black day to thee. The day is not over yet, and I already hear"—

"Why do you hate me, Anaik ? Why do you persecute and curse me ? I have never done you harm," broke in the poor young woman, in an imploring tone.

"Why? why?" screamed the hag. "Did not your husband drive me out of your house, and forbid me its entrance, because thou hadst complained to him about my evil eye, and my bad words ? And what had I said ? I had only called thee a rope-maker's daughter ; and that thou art, and wilt remain. But wait a little, and you too, all of you, who took so long a time to consider whether you would put up with old Anaik by your fireside, or leave her to freeze out of doors, your punishment is coming to you from Tréguier!"

"From Tréguier !" exclaimed several voices. "Have you been speaking to any one from thence ? Have you any tidings of the St. Pierre, Anaik ?"

"I have just come from Tréguier, and as I was leaving, a ship had just come in."

"Was it the St. Pierre, Anaik ? Tell us, for God's sake !" cried the poor women, springing up and crowding around the old woman, who seemed to delight in keeping them in suspense, while she filled her short, black pipe, and looked round the circle with a mocking glance. At last she replied—

Cagots may have served originally to designate an oppressed race—like the Helots and Parians of other countries. This expression of abhorrence was then applied to lepers, and in later years to the members of any trade or pursuit considered ignoble and degrading, as was the case in Brittany with rope-making and coopering.

"No, a Saxon ship."

The people of Brittany still call the English "Saxons."

The women gave vent to their disappointment in loud lamentations and complaint.

"What do we care about those heretic Saxons, if thou canst tell us nothing of our own people?" said the woman of the house, at length.

"The Saxons came from Terre-Neuve, too," continued Anaik, in a tone of indifference.

"Then they had perhaps some tidings to give of the St. Pierre?—speak, Anaik," implored Dinah, overcoming her repugnance, and, with gestures of entreaty, approaching the old woman, who made as if she had not even heard the question. But when all the rest had gathered round her, she began slowly, and drop by drop, to distil the poison she had prepared for them.

"The Saxons told of floating icebergs, between which ships were shivered like glass! They had heard the crash of one ship, and afterwards seen fragments of it float past them; and on one portion of a mirror there was the name to be read—what was it that the Saxons called it?—anyhow it was some saint or other. I've got it now—it was the St. Pierre! And there, you have the latest news!" said she in conclusion, in her screeching voice, which rose above the tumult of grief which suddenly succeeded to the deathlike silence in which the poor women had been listening. The name of the ship fell like a thunder-bolt amongst them. The spindles fell from their hands, and for a moment there was nothing to be heard but various expressions of the deepest anguish, so loud and violent, that every individual voice was lost in the general wail. Dinah alone knelt silent and rigid in a corner of the room, hiding her face upon her baby.

I looked steadfastly at the old woman, and could hardly

restrain my indignation and horror. Her malicious grin, and the manner in which she shrank from my gaze, gave me the firm impression that she was either telling a positive falsehood, or at all events making the very worst of any bad news she might really have heard.

"You are drunk, and you lie, you wicked *Groach!*!" I exclaimed at length, losing all self-control. "The St. Pierre is not lost, or at all events the crew is saved."

Upon my uttering the word *Groach*, which in Brittany signifies the very worst species of witch, her eyes flamed with rage, and she seemed ready to spring at my face like a wild cat. However, she contrived to compose herself again in some degree, and, changing at once her mocking expression into one of forced calmness and horrible solemnity, which quite subdued the poor women, who, in their deep distress, had again collected round her, wringing their hands, or convulsively clasping them together, she proceeded to say—

"So, then, old Anaik is drunken, and lies, according to the learned Tud-gentil! And he has heard of the *Groachs*, it seems, and thinks that poor Anaik must be one of them! Well, I have nothing to do with such learned gentlemen; but you women of Loc-Evar, you yourselves may understand the signs that are sure to follow. Just notice when you go to bed, whether you do not hear the salt water dropping down on the head of the bed; and you who have broken the three kings' bread,\* you may look and see whether the share of the drowned has not become mouldy. Ay, and God himself will soon show you whether Anaik Timor is a liar or not—the dead will speak for themselves and for me. Listen!"

Even I could hardly withstand the *uncanny* influence of

\* A loaf baked on the 6th of January, the day observed as the anniversary of our Lord's receiving the homage of the wise men of the East, who, in Roman Catholic countries, are known under the name of *The Three Kings*.

these words. We all silently listened for sounds without, where the storm had burst forth with fresh fury.

Whenever there was a moment's pause in the howling of the wind, a distant and solemn dirge might be heard, approaching nearer and nearer. Soon a longer interval occurred, and then we were able distinctly to hear several hollow wailing voices singing an ancient litany for unhappy souls, which, in the language of Brittany, ran something as follows:—

“Brothers, parents, friends, children, for God's sake hear and help us! Yes, for God's sake, if still there be pity left on earth!

“Those whom we have nourished have forgotten us, those whom we have loved feel no compassion for us!

“You are at ease and in comfort, but we poor souls endure torment; you sleep refreshing sleep, but we poor souls wake in bitter pains! We are in the flames of agony: fire on our heads, fire under our feet, fire above, fire below! Pray for us poor souls!”

During this dirge the women had fallen upon their knees, and through very horror were scarcely able to utter a few ejaculatory prayers. And I confess that I myself was for a few moments painfully struck by the coincidence of the old woman's conjuration with this ghostly dirge. However, I soon recovered myself, and hurried out to discover the true state of the case. But the snow was whirling about so thickly, that I could hardly discover even near objects by the moon's unsteady light, and after a few steps taken at random, I was glad to find myself in the cottage again. There was no longer anything to be heard. When I re-entered, I found the old woman standing triumphant in the midst of the miserable circle, and she at once exclaimed contumuously—

“Now, then, who has lied? who is drunken? Has the

Tud-gentil found what he wanted so much to find, or has he found out that old Anaik has spoken the truth?"

I answered, in some confusion, that on account of the snow, I had been unable to see the travellers or the pilgrims who had without doubt just passed by, but that the sounds could have had no other origin.

"Really," grinned the old hag, "travellers or pilgrims, nothing more! What do people in towns know about souls? The townspeople look upon their dead as though like dogs they rotted in the holes into which they are put, and there was an end of them. Very well, very well; the Almighty will show the heathens by and bye that they too have got souls, and then the gentleman will see whether those were not the souls of the men drowned in the St. Pierre who passed by just now. Ay, he will soon see"—

"The gentleman will see that he was right, and that Anaik Timor has lied," suddenly interposed a grave and severe voice.

I looked round: a priest had entered the cottage. The women sprang up, and with a ray of joyful veneration on their sorrowful faces, exclaimed—

"His reverence! God bless him!"

The priest, a worthy, dignified man in appearance, walked at once to the wicked old woman, and looking keenly at her, asked, in a tone of rebuke—

"What are you doing here, Anaik?"

"And why," answered she in a whining, and yet half defiant voice, "why should not the poor be where they can reckon upon a bit of bread and a good fire? Are we not in a Christian land, and may I not"—

"Silence!" broke in the priest with severity. "It is not hunger that brings you here, but revenge, and the love of giving pain."

Then turning to the women, he continued in a milder tone—"She has only told you a part of the truth, and that the worst part. It is true that the English ship brought tidings of the loss of the St. Pierre, but she also brought with her the crew which she saved,—at least the greatest part of the crew," added he, much distressed evidently to damp the overflowing joy with which the word *saved* was calculated to inspire the poor women.

While they, tossed about as they were by hope and fear, pressed round him with lamentations and questions, he related briefly that six of the men had, at the very moment of the shipwreck, agreed in vowing, that if their lives were spared, they would immediately upon their landing, without having spoken to any one belonging to them, or given them a sign of recognition, proceed with bare feet, and with heads closely veiled, to hear mass in the village church. "And," said he in conclusion, "you have just heard those six men pass by; and they must now be at the church, where I am going to say the mass for them. The remainder of the crew, alas! are drowned!"

The women could scarcely hear him to the end, and were about to rush out, each hoping to find her husband amongst the six saved. But the priest placed himself in the doorway, held them back, and sought earnestly and kindly to make them understand what a sin it would be in them to hinder their husbands in the performance of their vow. He exhorted them to bear the torments of suspense with pious resignation; some as a small thank-offering for the gracious interposition of the Blessed Virgin, who had saved those who turned to her in faith—the others, as a punishment of their sins, to which doubtless belonged some neglect of the reverence due from them to the Queen of Heaven.

But flesh and blood were stronger than all that the pious

man could urge. At first they were satisfied to besiege the priest with questions—each believing that they could discover in his looks, if not in his words, a confirmation of their fear or their hope. But when he remained proof against questions, prayers, lamentations, and reproaches, and remained firm in his priestly duty—though evidently only by dint of a most painful effort—they began to hurry out through a back door, which he had not perceived.

“Go, then!” he called out after them, really angry at last, “go, and desecrate the sanctity of a vow! Chastisement will surely overtake you in the life to come; but beware, moreover, that it do not suddenly fall upon you here! Beware, lest the very one who so lawlessly rushes foremost of all, be decreed not to find the man she seeks for!”

Dinah was the one who had hastened on in advance of the others. But as she heard these words spoken she suddenly stopped, and after a short and severe mental struggle, turned round, saying—

“No, I will be obedient—I will wait!”

Her example had a powerful influence upon the remainder. They all turned and fell on their knees in tearful supplication, while the good priest once more affectionately exhorted them, that each should bring with her the offering of self-sacrifice—that each should look upon herself as already a widow, or an orphan, that so, should her lost one be given back again, she might the more deeply, permanently, and practically acknowledge and adore the wonderful goodness of the Lord, and the mighty intercession of His Heavenly Mother, who had herself experienced such sorrows thousandfold—a sword having pierced through her heart also.

Having thus in some measure succeeded in calming, or at all events subduing them, he now called upon them to follow him to the church. All did so with the exception of Dinah,

who remained behind, and went hurriedly towards old Anaik, who was sitting the whole time by the fire, and seemed quite indifferent to what was going on.

"You know who are saved, and who are lost, Anaik?" asked Dinah, in a stifled voice.

"I?—how should I?" muttered the old woman. "And even if I did, has not the priest commanded you to wait?"

"Does my John live?—where is John?" continued the poor thing, in increasing excitement and distress.

And as the old woman remained silent, she fell down at her feet, and conjured her by all the saints, only to give her a sign of what was to be her fate.

"I can bear all—all, rather than this horrible suspense!" she repeated, over and over again, almost beside herself.

"Well, now," said at length the old hag, with a grin, "what wilt thou give me if I tell thee thy fortune?"

"All—all that I have, except my child!" cried Dinah, with one arm clasping her baby so tightly, that it screamed, and with the other reaching out to the wicked old woman whatever she had of value, as she believed. "There, my rosary—my cross of coral and ebony! There, there—my silver mourning-ring!"

The witch the while shook her head contemptuously, and at last said—

"What should I do with all these? I like thine anguish better!"

At that moment the bell rang a summons to mass, and Dinah sprang up, rushed out, and flew through the village to the church. I followed her.

The whole village was assembled there, in deep devotion—the women placed nearest the altar. A few sobs—a few ejaculations to the Virgin, alone interrupted the profound silence. The candles were burning on the altar: all was

ready. Then the door of the sacristy opened, and the priest came out, followed by six figures entirely concealed by grave-clothes. A cry of sorrow, impatience, anguish, rose at the sight, succeeded by the same breathless silence as before, and the sacred ceremonial proceeded without any further interruption. It was an impressive spectacle, this victory of faith and obedience over the strongest and the holiest impulses of nature.

I looked round for Dinah. She knelt at the entrance of the church, with upraised face, and arms drooping nerveless down. She had laid her little baby before her on the ground, like a sacrifice that neither can nor wills to escape from the fatal stroke.

At last the priest pronounced the words, *Ite, missa est!* All crowded at once in fearful excitement, with hearts and hands reaching out towards the altar, where stood the six shrouded forms.

“Lift up your souls in prayer!” said the priest solemnly, as he took hold of one of the six, bade him rise, and brought him forward, his grave-clothes falling down as he moved. A scream of rapture rose, and a wife lay sobbing on the breast of the rescued one. So it went on throughout the number. The excitement, the crowding, the exclamations of grief, on the other hand, grew more vehement at each discovery. The hopes of those who had not yet found their supporter grew ever weaker and weaker.

Again I looked round at Dinah. She knelt in the same position, as though turned to stone.

But when the last figure had risen, when the last shroud had fallen off, and her John had not stepped forward, she silently sank down in a swoon, and had to be carried away while the congregation was dispersing—the happy, with silent joy and thanksgiving; the unhappy, with loud weeping and wailing.

Yet I heard no imprecations, no expression that could in any way weaken the impressiveness of the whole scene.

I betook myself to the priest's house, where the greater part of the recent widows and orphans assembled. With much wisdom, he proffered to them all the consolations that faith and love are able to afford.

The following morning I continued my journey. The storm had raged itself to rest; the sun shone brightly from out the blue sky, and the spring seemed suddenly to waken in the heart of nature, in trees, and plants, and little merry birds.

When I returned by the same road a few days later, I met, not far from the village, a very poorly-dressed woman, with a baby in her arms, a bundle on her back, the white beggar's staff in her hand, and her head sunk low, as though she were walking in her sleep. It was Dinah! I had not the heart to waken her.



## THE CHOUANS.

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I HAD long made it a matter of conscience to endeavour to obtain on the spot, and from the few surviving warriors, the most authentic information possible, concerning the hitherto unnoticed, or mystified beginnings of that remarkable episode in the great and deadly struggle of old against new France—the *Chouannerie*. A respectable miller, whose little property was situated on the confines of the old provinces of Bretagne and Maine, where the strife was for the most part carried on, afforded me the means of fulfilling my purpose. Although, from his habits of mind, even more than from his age, he was himself incapable of sharing, or even of understanding my interest, he was able to direct me to those who could.

He came some little distance to meet me, and brought me to his mill, where the further line of operations was to be settled between us. As we drew near to the house, we saw a young man occupied about one of the sluices by which the water of the main wheel was either supplied or let off. On my asking about the lad, whose manner pleased me, the miller laughed, and said—

"That is Pierre, my only son and heir. He takes charge of his grandmother."

This was said in a tone that invited further question, as though to bring in some jest, or anecdote, and, in reply to my further inquiries, he added—

"We call the great sluice the grandmother, because it supplies us all with bread; but the boy, moreover, has to thank that sluice that he did not swallow his last crust some ten years ago. The thing happened thus: I was standing here, by the sluice, and the water was let off, as there was not much to be done just then, when suddenly, splash! and there was the boy in the deepest part of the stream. He had fallen over the steep bank, and I saw two legs above the water, and then nothing. I considered—for action without consideration brings no good;—so I said to myself, 'Before thou couldst find a pole long enough to reach the bottom—before thou couldst find the boy, even if thou wert to jump in after him—and thou canst swim like a pair of shears—the lad is drowned, so'—in short, sir, in the twinkling of an eye, I opened the sluice, and the water rushed out like a mountain torrent in spring, while I stood upon the watch, holding by my left hand to that beam, as I hung over the foaming waterfall ready for a grasp with my right. And sure enough, in a few seconds, I saw a dark object floating in the green and turbid waters. Quick as thought, I seized it as it was rushing onward to the great wheel, and drew out my Pierre by the hair of his head!"

"But suppose you had missed your grasp?"

"Ay, *suppose!*" he rejoined with a short laugh, and then resumed seriously, "in that case, the next moment would have seen him torn and crushed in the wheel, and *me too, sir.*"

I have given this little incident rather as affording an apt

illustration of the peculiar kind of courage and decision by which the Manceau and the French Breton are distinguished from the Armorian on the one hand, and from the Vendean on the other, than from any special importance of its own. The three races are alike characterized by courage of the highest order; but the courage of the Manceau is cool and calculating, and has regard, not only to the end, but the means; that of the Vendean, when once aroused, is brilliant and joyous; while the courage of the genuine Breton is of darker, sterner mood. These distinctions carry weight in a struggle which, being one of old nationalities against all-levelling revolution—a struggle for religion, superstitions, customs, privileges, and freedom, necessarily brought out all the peculiarities of individual character.

I soon saw that to gain the friendship of the only surviving brother-in-arms of the celebrated Jean Cottreau Chouan, was the most likely means of accomplishing my purpose. Ever since the war, this man had been known in the country by the name of *Va-de-bon-cœur*; and he was now settled within about six miles of the mill.

"He will tell you stories by the hour, if you can but once set him agoing; but he is suspicious of strangers, at least of such as are called gentlemen. He ever remembers that he might even now be called to account for the past. And, moreover, you will soon see that he is fast becoming childish; he is generally to be found sitting before his door, knitting garters, and teaching the children prayers and the catechism. To look upon him now, it is hard to believe that he is the man who stopped Diligences, shot Patauds, as the patriots were called, and tied tricolour cockades to the dogs' tails. And mind, if you would bring him to speech, don't be hasty, but take time and a key to open the old man's heart; and the best key you can take is a bottle of genuine Cognac. And

now, my *char-à-banc* is ready, and we will start for Boutière without further delay."

This was the name of the farm-house where the venerable Chouan lived. The road lay through deep, shady lanes, and the overhanging branches were tipped with ears of corn, the tribute of the lofty-loaded harvest-waggons, as they passed beneath. On either side of the high hedges resounded the cheerful voices of the harvesters, or the monotonous and regular strokes of the flail. But we saw nothing for half an hour together, save now and then, on a bank by the wayside, a little girl leading a cow, as it fed on the short, succulent grass, or chewed the cud, and turned from its meditations to gaze at us.

As we approached a cross-way, I was struck by the imposing and picturesque effect of a hollow tree, of vast circumference, and graced by a sprouting coronal of freshest green, that stood in the centre. Against the open side a crucifix was nailed, and before this a peasant girl was kneeling at her prayers. My conductor told me that the Chouans had found their best hiding-places in these hollow trees, and that a skeleton had been discovered in this, in the course of the last few years—the rusty musket still resting in the bony hand. "Whether the poor fellow did not find it so easy to get out as in, and so died of hunger; whether he had crept there for safety after a defeat, and had bled to death from his wounds; or whether the Blues had killed the badger in his hole, can no man tell. However it might be, the priests made no difficulty about finding him a grave in consecrated ground, where they buried him with distinguished honours, and then placed a crucifix here for offerings of four sous. Not a peasant passes without lifting his hat, and as to the women—the white-caps, as we call them, on account of their head-dresses—they make a regular chapel of the gnarled and shattered oak.

"But yonder," he exclaimed, breaking off abruptly, "is Marie Cottereau, a direct descendant of the old hero whose track you are upon, sir. Marie ! Marie !" he shouted, "you've said paters enow, and are sharp enough; here is a strange gentleman who wants to speak to you, my young white-cap!"

But the girl continued her devotions as though she heard not.

"Her hearing is just like the mole's, but there must be some special reason—it's the way with those people. Marie ! Marie ! the gentleman declares you are the prettiest girl he saw in the church, and he's come on purpose to speak to you, my angel !"

Still Marie prayed on.

"Ah, I have you now !" said the tempter, in a half whisper; then aloud—"I have brought you the ten francs owing to you at our last reckoning."

A slight nod was the only rejoinder, and it was plain that the case was hopeless.

"Since she is deaf to the ten francs, there is nothing to be done with her," said the miller, driving away. "The little stubborn maiden is a worthy grandchild of the widow of *les Poiriers*."

To my inquiries about this personage, he replied thus—

"You know our custom of calling people by the name of the farm they cultivate; that of the widow Cottereau was called *les Poiriers*. Have you never heard of the old woman? Then I can tell you somewhat concerning her, for my uncle was notary at Port-Brillet, and did business for the Cottreaux. He used to say, in his learned way, that the widow of Poiriers was a genuine Roman. As for myself, I have no personal acquaintance with these folk, but he has told me the story a hundred times. We will get up the hill first, where the road is better."

When we were again on level ground, he settled himself comfortably in his seat, and then proceeded with his narrative—

“ You must know first, that the Cottereaux\* were wood-workers from generation to generation—the people who make our great wooden shoes, and all sorts of utensils besides—living in huts in the heart of the forests. They have neither doctors nor priests among them ; and in winter they add the business of smuggling salt to their wood-work. The great salt sack, and the long iron-shod staff, for the *Gabeloux*,† and to mark a grave, are regularly transmitted from father to son. You may imagine what a charming, orderly, well-conducted race these night-birds brought up. They were called *Chouins*, from a kind of night-owl common in those parts, and the gentlemen of the press have made this into *Chouans*.

“ The husband of our Roman was, however, a trifle more civilized than his neighbours. He had learnt to read, Heaven knows how ! and used on Sundays to come round to the farm-houses, and read to the farmers the legends of the saints, while he taught the little ones Christmas carols. It was thus that he became acquainted with Jeanne Mayné, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, and soon married her.

“ Jeanne’s father, however, was one of the old stamp, and vowed that no man should marry his daughter who would not follow the plough and till the land, as her ancestors had done ever since the days of good King Dagobert.

“ The daughter said not a word, but on the third morn she was off and away ; and in token that she had no purpose of

\* It is well known that the troops of the French Condottieri of the fifteenth century, who for a long period had possession of this country, laying every one under contribution, and everywhere spreading terror, were called Cottereaux. It is not improbable that the first Chouans were their descendants, and this may account for their proud, warlike spirit.

† The officers who collected the salt-duty.

returning, her distaff and her trencher lay broken on the threshold.

"She came to the forest of Concise, where Cottreau had reared his hut, and declared that she was his. The next thing was the church and the wedding; and they set off together to Saint Ouen-des-Toits, the bride's parish. When they got there, Jeanne advanced first into the church to get speech of the priest, but as she entered, he stood up in the pulpit and began to read the *monitoire*.<sup>\*</sup> After admonishing certain persons who had neglected mass, or profaned saints' days and Sundays, and so forth, he mentioned a maiden who had forsaken her home and her parents to follow a man, thereby bringing trouble and distress upon them, and a grievous scandal on the parish; he therefore admonished her to make confession of her sin in the face of the congregation, and then to return to her parents, under pain of excommunication. Jeanne, who, up to this point, had been kneeling with her head down, in order that she might not be known among the rest of the women, now arose and said her *confiteor* in a clear and steady voice, quite unabashed.

"Great was the sensation; and the priest himself was at first doubtful how he should receive this extraordinary confession, and whether he should not meet it with rebuke. But Jeanne spoke him so fair, that all the womankind began to wail, even those of her own family; and even the heads of the house either could not, or would not, bring anything against her. So the good man commended her to the prayers of the congregation, and adjourned further proceedings. The further proceeding, however, was that he took her that even-

\* Before the Revolution, it was the custom in western France for the priest to proclaim monitions (*monitoire*) from the pulpit against all such offences and omissions as came before him. The name was not mentioned on the first time of reading, but the culprits were invited to confession, repentance, and amendment, under pain of Church censures.

ing to his own house, and there, in the stillness of the night, pronounced the nuptial benediction over her and her Cottreau, and gave her a fine Latin certificate, so that nobody could trouble her any more. She lived on tolerable terms with her parents afterwards, and at their decease succeeded to *les Poiriers*, as her share of the inheritance. On the death of her husband, she came to live there. He was a serious and somewhat austere but a good man ; and they had lived happily together, and had had two daughters and four sons, Jean Chouan being one of them.

“Long before he began his dance after the Blues, Jean Chouan was known as the boldest and bravest salt-smuggler in the whole country ; and this you may have proof of if you choose to listen to it in the *Chant du jeune Gas-menton*,\* still sung in our streets and fields. This was the name by which he was more generally known than by his own. He had acquired it on account of the cunning with which he was wont to deceive the custom-house officers, beguiling them with fair words and specious pretexts, and all the while leading them astray. Thus whatever the dilemma, he used to say, ‘There’s no fear ;’ and this became his byword whenever dangers or difficulties were started in his presence. On one occasion, when he heard that the officers of justice were coming to seize his goods on account of a fine that he had incurred, he first bestowed all his moveables with his neighbours, and then, finding the representatives of the law preparing to unroof the house for the sake of the tiles, he returned, and, no wise angered, courteously proffered his services at the price of a dram. When evening came, and he had finished his task, he invited the officers to come and see that all was right, telling them that he had laid the tiles in order in the kitchen. No sooner had they entered, than, locking the door from without,

\* Literally, “Lying fellow.”

he wished them a good evening, and a pleasant experience of a night of storm and snow in a roofless hut, as he thought it might be turned to good account by persons who went about unroofing tenements professionally. On this, he went his way, leaving them to bluster and swear at their leisure.

"But it was a losing game. He and his brothers were brought down with repeated fines and imprisonments; and, exasperated by these, they became reckless and desperate, and were hunted like foxes by the custom-house officers.

"One night they were caught, with half a dozen other wild lads, all laden with salt, and leaping-poles in hand, so that escape was impossible. Jean fell upon the little Pierre, as one of the officers was called, and dealt him a fatal blow with his long pole, and the rest took advantage of the scuffle to get away with their booty. Great fear now fell upon the smuggling community—for an outrage such as this was of rare occurrence—and the general feeling was, that the offender should make for Brittany, and keep quiet there till the affair had blown over. Jean, however, maintained that "there was no fear," and stayed in the forest. There, one fine day, he was caught, and carried off to Laval, where his trial and sentence were quickly despatched. When the aged Jeanne heard the news, she was milking the last goat that the fines had left her; and rising from her seat, she cried aloud—

"'Holy Virgin! they will hang my Jean!'

"Then leaving the goat to its fate, she donned her best pair of shoes, and ran off to the Château de Talmont—the prince having always been a good friend to her and her people.

"But alas! the prince was at Court. For one half hour the widow remained silently on the castle staircase, speaking no word to any one. At last she exclaimed—

"'The king must give me back my *Gas-Menton!*'\* And

\* A specimen of the *Complainte du Gas-Menton* may not be unacceptable here:—

taking off her shoes, she set out barefoot upon the weary, weary way to Versailles.

"On the fifth day she arrived, having walked for seventy hours without stopping, save to ask for a morsel of bread, or an hour's rest on some clean straw by the roadside. But at Versailles she was no nearer the attainment of her object. The prince was absent; and there was not a creature to whom she could apply for advice or assistance as to the means of approaching the king. In her distress she threw herself on her knees before a crucifix, and there lay weeping and praying all night long; and there, in the morning, she was recognised by the prince's coachman, a kind-hearted fellow, who happened to be passing. Touched with compassion for his aged countrywoman, he stopped, and asked her whether she would have courage to speak to the king if she could get access to his Majesty.

"'Have I not been speaking to the King of kings?' was her only reply.

"'Well, then,' rejoined the man, 'I will risk my place to serve a countrywoman; and God will put the right words into your mouth if you ask Him.'

"And then, lifting her into the prince's chariot, he drove forwards without hindrance from the guards, who, seeing the prince's arms and liveries, supposed him to be seated within. So Jeanne was driven to the entrance-court, where all the

*"Faut pas crier ainsi, ma mère,  
Chaussez vos meilleurs souliers,  
Laissez tout et partez vite,  
Sans rabattre votre tablier.*

\* \* \* \*

*J' ferai cent lieues et j'en frais mille  
Rien que sur l'cuir de mes pieds;  
Mon fils, il faut que je parte,  
Dans mes mains j'ai mes souliers,  
Et dans le cœur pour aller vite,  
Mon fils, j'ai mon amitié," &c.*

equipages were drawn up, waiting till the king should come out to take his drive.

"No sooner did Louis make his appearance, than old Jeanne, springing out of the carriage, threw herself at his feet, exclaiming—

"'Mercy! mercy for my Gas-Menton, gracious seigneur! The custom-house officers have got the better of us, and now they are about to hang my Jean! Oh, mercy! only have mercy on my son! and there are seven of us, who hence-forward will pray night and day for such a gracious king!'

"For a moment Louis was startled by the sudden movement of the woman, whose dress and speech were alike unfamiliar to him, and whose bearing seemed that of a maniac. The courtiers gathered round, and would have removed her as dangerous; but instantly recovering his presence of mind, the king proceeded to question her, and after listening with all patience to her story, he walked back to the palace to satisfy the poor woman—who would on no other condition rise from the spot where she had knelt—by writing an order for an inquiry into the trial, to be followed presently by a full pardon."

"And thus," I exclaimed in some surprise, "Louis spared the life of the man who was subsequently the first to answer the challenge of the Republic, by levelling his musket at its soldiers to the tune of 'God save the king'?"

"It was even so, sir," resumed my guide; "and if you wish to know more about this, and a thousand other matters, you have but to ask old Va-de-bon-coeur, whose cottage I now see just behind the clump of trees to the right."

We now turned into a narrow lane, which soon brought us in front of a substantial peasant's dwelling-house, where a troop of young lads were busied, amid jokes and peals of laughter, in sweeping the threshing-floor—an open space of

trodden clay—as clean as brooms could make it, while their sisters were decorating it with boughs and ribbons.

"We are come just in the nick of time," observed the miller as he alighted; "they are preparing for the harvest-home. This is a happy hit for gentlemen like you, who are upon the track of old customs, and old stories and songs."

I was fully aware of the Druidical character of the harvest-home festival in Brittany proper, where the peasant never speaks in any but a devotional tone of the "corn of the blessed God;" but I had not expected to find it thus celebrated on the French border. I soon perceived, however, that the thing had a freer, and, if I may so say, a more worldly character here than among the pure Celtic race.

There was no time to make friends with old Va-de-bon-cœur, who, as patriarch of the family, had taken his seat on the bench at the door, clad in the old provincial costume, and with his white hair streaming over his shoulders, peacefully looking on. Before we had time to look about us, we found ourselves in the midst of the festival, in which we were at once invited to participate, as though we had been old acquaintance. The farmer, a noble-looking, middle-aged man, a nephew of the elder Chouan, was now led by two youths in holiday dress to the barn, to fetch in the last sheaf, which, according to the rhymes still repeated on these occasions, is equal in weight to the whole harvest, and can by no might of mortal man be lifted, unless by one gifted for the occasion with supernatural power. The farmer grasped the flower-wreathed sheaf, and bore it off in triumph to the threshing-floor, and the procession was then formed. First came two young girls, carrying brooms made of green fir-branches, with which they swept the path before the sheaf-bearer; these were followed by children, swinging garlands woven of fresh flowers mingled with ears of corn. After these we were de-

sired to fall in ; and it was rather from want of stout arms than in compliance with our earnest desire, that we escaped the special traditional honour of the guest—the being carried in a sort of litter, beneath a canopy of leafy boughs. We gladly compromised the matter, by allowing a couple of very pretty girls, with bright tin plates in their hands, to walk at our side, and present us with fresh barley and sweet flowers. Behind us came a youth bearing the sieve, and flinging aloft handfuls of corn and chaff so adroitly as to catch the corn again in the sieve, while the chaff was dispersed in the air. The threshers brought up the rear, beating time on the ground with their flails.

And in this manner, with song, laugh, and discharge of small arms, we walked twice round the threshing-floor, after which the sheaf was spread in the centre and threshed out, amid jest and merriment, with admirable skill. Refreshments were plentifully served the while ; but the harvest-home feast was not till evening. The invitations are given by sending a nosegay, which is left in the dairy. Across all the winding paths that intersected the surrounding fields, the neighbours might now be seen wending their way, each woman with her pan of thick milk, adorned with flowers. Contrary to the custom of the north-western provinces of France, the women are allowed, in honour of the harvest-home, to sit at table with their husbands ; and the scene was one alike of enjoyment and sobriety.

As to my special business with the patriarch of the house, it seemed at first little likely to come off. He was silent and suspicious—rather, as I feared, of my companion than of myself; indeed, the miller's exaggerated friendliness and cordiality was as displeasing to me as to my host. I asked the latter what his age might be. He replied, with an air of honest pride—“ Seventy-one times hath the Lord granted me

the favour of coming on my feet to meet the harvest-sheaf; once I was carried in my mother's arms."

I thought that now indeed I had got the right end of the thread; and I proceeded to allude to the many circumstances of interest he must have witnessed—asking him, moreover, how he had contrived to keep the harvest-home during the time of the *Great War*. I do not remember his answer; but when the miller in a loud voice broke in upon our conversation, the old man cast a sidelong glance at us both, and said—"The Blessed God is almighty, and can make time for all things."

Shortly afterwards, and in a very unexpected manner, I found a way to his confidence—and all the more readily for the absence of the miller, who left us to attend to some business in the neighbourhood connected with one of the seven lawsuits of which he had made a merit with me.

It happened that the old Chouan, after the fashion of his country—a fashion in which the Manceaux are no whit behind the Normans—was involved in *at least* one lawsuit, that occasioned him its full share of vexation and anxiety. On his alluding to the subject, I told him that I was a lawyer, and could give him hopes and suggestions such as his own counsel had *not* held out, doubtless lest the pleasures of the lawsuit should too speedily be brought to an end. This opened the old man's heart; a couple of glasses of Cognac did the rest—and, in a word, I was afloat; and although he spoke at first with a measure of shyness and confusion, yet, warming under the influence of his own reminiscences, he then, and at subsequent meetings, related to me many interesting particulars relative to the beginning of the *Chouannerie*, and many of its more minute details hitherto unknown. Some of these I propose now to give to the reader, as nearly as possible in the words of the original narrator.

Jean Cottreau the salt-smuggler, commonly known as Gasmenton, was, as the miller had told me, one of four brothers. Pierre, the eldest, was the only one who had followed his father's trade as a wood-carver. He was a gentle, quiet, simple soul ; and "better fitted to milk the cow than to make head against the wolf," as old *Va-de-bon-cœur* was used to say. Moreover, he stuttered, and being on this account unacceptable as a companion, lived much to himself. The two younger, François and Réné, went out with Jean as salt-smugglers ; the former, indeed, greatly resembled him in character. He was equally remarkable for cunning, boldness, tenacity of purpose, and faithfulness to his friends ; while he was distinguished from his brother by a certain romantic turn for adventure, which is by no means uncommon among the people of this province. Réné, unlike either, was malicious, covetous, and unmerciful, literally taking pleasure in bloodshed, and as it were, becoming intoxicated by it. His covetousness, and the ways and means by which it was manifested, would have been often ludicrous, if they had not been connected with circumstances of the most atrocious cruelty. The sisters were Perrine and Rénée, who seldom left the paternal roof during the continuance of the war. In this district, it is regarded as a sin against honour and propriety for women to be in any way associated with the doings of the opposite sex ; and thus the women of Maine took no part whatever in the strife ; while in Brittany and La Vendée, the women shared alike in its wild passions, and its deed of heroism. The habitual caution of the Manceau peasant may have something to do with this, for they have a proverb—"A deserted house invites the thief," and in fact the plundering generally began in the empty houses.

In spite of the memorable proximity in which he had once found himself to the hempen collar, and the wonderful escape

therefrom, for which he was indebted to his mother, Jean Cottereau could in no wise be induced to give up his wild and desperate career, and soon became involved in difficulties of a similar kind. From these he was again extricated through the friendship of the Prince de Talmont, who contrived to get him out of the country, and admitted into Turenne's regiment, then quartered at Lille. This was all very well for the winter; but no sooner did the sun begin to shine and the birds to sing among the fresh green leaves of the forest, than he began to pine for his woodland home. A letter, which he received from his friends about this time, converted the yearning desire into an irresistible impulse; and he deserted. His noble patron could only avert the consequences of this step by procuring a *lettre-de-cachet*, and thus getting him out of the way for two years. This seclusion was the means of effecting a wonderful change in Jean's character; he who had entered the prison a wild, reckless youth, left it an earnest, thoughtful man, alive to all generous and lofty impulses.

It was shortly after his release that the Revolution broke out; and it found in him at every moment, and in every phase of its career, an avowed and thorough-going opponent. His mother, as she was wont to say for the purpose of renewing her gratitude and stimulating her prayers, was continually repeating the story of her adventure with the king, imitating his manner of speaking, and describing his appearance. With simple, and almost prophetic pride, she would declare that from that hour of mercy, the Bourbons and the Cottreaux were indissolubly linked together. Her devotion to the Church was part and parcel of her loyalty to the Crown. The tongue that denied and insulted the one, blasphemed and ridiculed the other; and the same impious hand was uplifted for the destruction of both. Eventually, the struggle became

to Jean what it was to the whole population of western France—one waged for rights and liberties, against the despotism of revolutionary equality.

These liberties included not only all that gives to social and daily life its peculiar charm and character ; not alone the traditions and the discipline through which the influence of the Church is so universally felt—they also involved civil rights, and especially the time-honoured parochial system ; and although, in the headlong career of youthful daring, Jean had cared little for these things, yet now, in the maturity of manly reason, he had become fully aware of their importance. If he did not, like Cathelineau in La Vendée, take for his watchword, *La Liberté des Paroisses*, he well knew how to bring this side of the question to bear upon the feelings and passions of his neighbours.

It is true that the Royalist rising was by no means general among the peasantry of Maine ; still, that part of the population which did take part in it, stamped the impress of its original character on all its operations, and was on several occasions greatly distinguished.

The carrying out of the decree for the universal demolition of convents, gave to Jean, as it did to other Royalist leaders, the long-wished-for pretext for the commencement of the war. On the 15th of August 1792, the youth of Saint Ouen-des-Toits were invited to enrol themselves in the national guard. They came for the most part without suspicion, and as a matter of customary obedience ; but when they found themselves in the midst of gendarmes and pen-and-ink, the sacred loyalty of the peasants soon got the better of their respect for the scribes around them, and instead of enrolling their names at the command of the mayor, they broke out into menaces and revilings ; and on the gendarmes attempting to use force, Jean Chouan raised the cry of *Vive le Roi !—à bas la Nation !*

and throwing himself on the gendarmes, at the head of a few comrades, soon put them to flight with a sound drubbing.

If the peasantry had had to do with the authorities and the gendarmes only, it is very possible that this encounter might have had no further consequences ; but in the wake of these came the towns, where all were more or less penetrated with the new ideas. Burghers of La Barronnière, Andonillé, and La Brulatte, who had looked on quietly, if not well pleased, as long as the assault affected only the mayor of a rival neighbouring town and his officials, were by no means prepared to submit to the insult offered to the national tricolour, which they had that morning borne in triumph from Laval. They fell upon Jean Chouan, who had seized and was carrying it off ; but in this second struggle the Royalists were again victorious, and finally marched away, bearing the banner, the prize of the strife.

Jean Chouan, who had previously held consultations and formed plans in concert with the Royalists of the neighbouring province, and the heads of the party, now proceeded without delay to organize the rising, in so far and in such wise as the nature of the country and the character of the people allowed ; while the peasantry in general gave a passive and moral support to the cause, readily furnishing rations to the Royalists ; but the military element consisted of not more than a few hundred men, trained by previous circumstances, and stimulated by passion and by personal feeling. These all recognised Jean Chouan as their leader, and placed themselves at his disposal for any enterprise that he thought fit to undertake, the most part returning afterwards to their homes, or places of refuge. A little band there was, bound to him by ties of special affection, who constituted themselves as his body-guard and staff, and accompanied him alike in his hiding-places and his encampments—in the forest and on the

moor. In cases of imminent danger, even these were accustomed to disperse, each shifting for himself as he best might. Their leader's retreat was then known only to some trusty confidant, who carried messages, and urged the warriors to fresh undertakings. Not unfrequently, Jean was his own aide-de-camp.

Subsequently, when the conventional courtesies of warfare were forgotten in the exasperation of prolonged strife, and the massacre of prisoners—even of the unarmed—had become common on both sides, the number of those who remained with their leader was greatly increased. The Royalists, driven from every shelter by the conquering Republicans, were anxious to save their friends and relatives from the fearful death that awaited those who were known to have been guilty of harbouring or assisting them.

The next onslaught was led by the national guard of the little neighbouring towns, who, in order to avenge the insult to the tricolour, made military excursions into the surrounding villages, which were in bad repute with them for their Royalist tendencies. Jean Chouan took advantage of one of these excursions to encourage his men by dealing a heavy blow to the enemy. He ordered some few hundred men up from Laumy-Villiers, and lay in wait for the patriots—or Patauds, as they were called in derision—at Bourgneuf, and falling upon them, slew twenty, and scattered the rest in all directions.

It was after this outrage that he and his more immediate personal followers had sentence of death passed on them, and concealed themselves in the forest of Misdon, between the forge of Port-Brillet and the village of Olivet. They numbered about forty; and among these was one Trion, commonly called Miellette. He was second only to his leader, in dexterity, daring, and physical strength; but he wanted the seriousness

and the moral ascendancy of Jean. He was, however, distinguished by a drollery and love of fun, which never forsook him under any circumstances of privation or difficulty, and which rendered him peculiarly useful and acceptable as a companion. Often, when the little band was sunk in the depths of gloom and despondency, a jest from Miellette could in a moment provoke them to laughter, and revive their spirits and courage. There was only one among the number who was insensible to these influences, being too full of his own importance. His name was Godeau, and he was a stately man, addicted to high-sounding phrases, and of lofty manners, which he had acquired in some great house where he had been gamekeeper. He moreover asserted his claims to be regarded as a learned man, one who knew Latin—a knowledge confined, as it was generally believed, to the *Dominus Vobiscum*—picked up from a priest, whom he had formerly served. He used to complain bitterly of the evil times that had taken him from his beloved books.

As to François Cottreau, no home could have pleased him better than the forest of Misdon, since at the forest-edge lay the hamlet of Lorière—the dwelling-place of “*la pauvre donzelle*.” This was the soubriquet given to a poor orphan who had been found suspended in her cradle to the bell-rope in the church-tower at Olivet, by a farmer of Lorière, who had taken her home and brought her up. Susan was at this time about twenty years of age; but she was so small and delicate, that if it had not been for her rich and powerful voice, no one would have supposed her to have been more than fifteen. It was only for this, and for her helplessness, and her innocence, and her lowly, obliging temper, that she could have been loved—for she was anything but pretty. She was known far and wide as the most exquisite of songstresses. When she was herding the cattle of her foster-father in the forest, with no

other companion than her faithful dog, her song resounded incessantly; and they were chiefly the plaintive ballads of the olden time that she sang. It was those that had first attracted François, and he had soon loved her tenderly, but rather with the affection of a brother, and in pity to her orphan state, than with any other feeling. He would sit for hours by the pool beside her, listening to her song, and not unfrequently his comrades too would come and make a circle round *la pauvre donzelle*, and listen, while they thought sadly of their friends at home.

It happened one day, that the cottagers of Port-Brillet, who regarded themselves as townspeople and played the patriot, taking advantage of the absence of the whole Chouan party, fell upon their huts and utterly destroyed them, carrying away everything they contained. The Royalists, on their return, found themselves roofless and helpless, without even the means of preparing their food. Without a moment's delay they set out upon the track of the marauders, overtook them on Olivet heath, killed several of their number, and then returned in triumph to the forest with their recovered spoils, Miellette marching at their head, with the great kettle on his spear-staff as a trophy.

The national guards soon suffered so severely, that they no longer dared to meet the enemy in the open field, and it became necessary to send Republican troops called Blues to their support. In spite of this succour, victory still, in general, declared for the Chouans—the name of their leader being now universally given to the Royalist party. His mode of warfare was simple enough, and, for the most part, the same tactics were repeated with the same result. The enemy's columns were enticed into one of the interminable, deep, and narrow lanes overhung with tall trees, or they were allowed to defile into it without interruption, to carry out some plan of which

Jean Chouan generally had accurate information. His followers then formed themselves into three separate companies, and lay in wait behind the hedges. When the enemy had passed the second ambushment, the first would rush out and attack the rear of the column, while it was beset in front by the third division ; the second waiting for the propitious moment to fall on the centre. Sometimes the centre was the first attacked, and the other divisions fell in afterwards. It was seldom that the Chouans ventured to attack the towns garrisoned by regular troops, and the defeats sustained by them were chiefly on occasions when they had deviated from this practice. In the meanwhile, the war in La Vendée had developed itself far more extensively ; Lescure, Larochejaquelein, Stofflet, Charette, and Beauchamp, with Cathelineau as their leader, had led the Vendéans from conquest to conquest, had annihilated one Republican army after another, and torn the tricolour banner from every fastness in Brittany. Only Nantes still held out. The taking of this city might have been the death-blow of the Republic, as Cathelineau's decease before its gates was the death-blow of La Vendée. There was no man who understood the people as he did who had been one of them. None could manœuvre them as he could for the battle, and yet leave them to fight it in their own way. None was like him qualified by personal gifts, by the respect of the aristocratic and the confidence of the popular element, for the supreme command. It was to the want of unanimity among the older leaders that the defeat of Beau-priren must be attributed, and it was by the subsequent retreat across the Loire that La Vendée was torn from itself. Jean Chouan was apprised of this movement by the Prince de Talmont, who invited him to support, and associate himself with it, but without naming time or place. The prince's will, however, was law to Jean, who never forgot the old ancestral ties

that linked him to the family, nor the protection that he had formerly owed to its living representative. He commanded his bands to rendezvous at the forest of Pertre, where he was met by certain noble leaders of the party, De Puysage and Duboisguy. His aged mother and Susanne—*la pauvre donzelle*, had accompanied him, as the only means of escaping the vengeance of the Republicans. As time went on, and no one appeared, the former suddenly exclaimed—

“God help us! it thunders!”

“Thunder in October!” rejoined Miellette, laughing; “that must be a straggler of last August.”

“I know what it is,” said Godeau gravely; “it is a mere physical echo from some cavern.”

“*It is the thunder of the cannon*—it is the Vendean!” exclaimed Jean Chouan, who had put his ear to the ground. “Forwards! forwards to Laval, my brave fellows! The Prince de Talniont is expecting us.”

Jean hastened to Laval at the head of four hundred men. Some of his people halted before the house of the President Moulins, who had pronounced the sentence of death against their leader, and called aloud for the judge, in order to reward him after their fashion for his trouble. His wife opened the door in fear and trembling, and assured them that her husband was not within.

“Fear nothing, Madame,” said Jean Chouan kindly, “it is only the malefactors of Monsieur your husband, who have called to pay their respects to him.”

She then invited him to come in and take some refreshment; but he excused himself on the plea of haste, and was going away, when, overhearing some threatening expressions from his followers, he paused, broke a couple of branches of grapes from the vine that overhung the porch, and ate a few of the grapes; and then, thanking the good wife with the

greatest cordiality for her kind reception, he put spurs to his horse and rode on. But no one after this dared, even by a look, to alarm his hostess. They well understood the symbolical teaching of their leader, and were perfectly aware that no one would be allowed with impunity to infringe the rites of the hospitality which he had accepted at the house of his enemy. The courtesy could hardly have been more graciously managed by the prince himself.

The arrival of the men of Maine—who numbered about five thousand, and who were commonly styled *La petite Vendée*—was a subject of rejoicing and of hope to the native Vendéans: it was one of the last bright gleams that preceded the horrible catastrophe of that giant struggle. All were delighted with the bearing of the Manceau leader, and struck with the wisdom and lofty resolve that distinguished his counsels, no less than with his extreme modesty. They were astonished, too, at the authority he exercised over a body of men who, as they said, *followed him only out of friendship*; for in their own army, order and discipline were sinking lower and lower every day, in spite of the efforts of the bravest and most beloved of their few remaining leaders. Of the thirty or forty thousand well-appointed troops, who, accompanied by a motley crowd of women and children, cattle and loaded waggons, had passed the Loire, not more than five or six thousand were really interested in the Royalist cause, and ready to fight for the love of it. Against the overwhelming superiority of numbers, this noble band bore off untarnished, on every such occasion, the laurels of its former fame; and of these it may be said—"La Vendée fell, but it was never conquered."

But even among these, there was no nucleus for the formation of a regular command, such as might have insured the execution of any definite plan of defence or escape, even if the divisions among the chiefs had not rendered any such plan

impossible. Every individual soldier was the mere creature of his own will, and yielded obedience to that leader only who was the object of his previous regard and attachment, and that only when actually engaged with the enemy—nor even then was his submission to be relied on. The bravest leaders, such as Larochejacquelein\* and Stofflet, were often reduced to the necessity of throwing themselves into the hottest of the fight at the head of their men—though against orders, and against their own better judgment—merely to escape the imputation of cowardice, and the consequent loss of all influence. After these came some ten or fifteen thousand, who were ready enough to join in the fight when the former had secured the victory, but on whom it was impossible to reckon for withstanding any attack, however favoured by circumstances. The rest were a demoralized and useless mob, indifferently appointed, scarcely even to be induced to stand to their arms, and certain to flee in confusion the moment they were attacked.

Any regular gradation of officers was unknown in this self-constituted army. In battle, each followed his friend, or the leader who was the object of his special regard, or to whom he found himself nearest. On the march, no sort of order was observed; at every moment armed men were leaving the ranks and dropping behind, to mingle with the groups of women and children, wounded and sick, who covered the baggage-waggons. Hunger and disease, grief and despair, made daily ravages among this miserable host; and their line of march was revealed to the pursuing Republicans by the dead bodies which strewed the road.

When it was necessary to make a circuit in order to avoid a town, the confusion was almost inextricable, rendering

\* The noblest and truest martyr of the cause, whose well-known word to his followers is a model of heroic eloquence—"Si j'avance, suivez-moi; si je meurs, vengez-moi; si je recule, tuez-moi!"

attack or defence alike impossible. The only compact body consisted of a few hundred men, the personal followers of their chiefs, who formed a sort of van and rear guard, and kept watch against impending danger from whatever side it menaced the main army.

Among these, Jean Chouan and his band soon occupied a distinguished place. He had naturally associated himself with the Prince de Talmont ; and he it was who had decided the fortune of the day on the bloody field of Croix-Bataille, where the Blues sustained so signal a defeat, by pointing out to the prince a track which had enabled him to surround them. But every such victory only multiplied the dangers and confirmed the hopelessness of the retreat. The refreshment of the combatants, and the care of the wounded, involved the necessity of a halt, and this gave time to the advancing divisions of the enemy to come up. The unsuccessful attack upon Granville, where the Royalists had hoped to fortify themselves till they could embark, and the consequent forced retreat upon Laval, increased their sufferings to the utmost, and reduced them to absolute despair. Attacked on all sides by the Blues, the further march was one long struggle, with few intervals of rest. At Dôl, a panic terror seized the entangled mass. Even the bravest—even Stofflet, with two hundred horsemen, was forced back into the retreating stream, while urging his horse to the attack with shouts of “Death ! death for the brave !”

The women, with loud and angry cries, reproached their husbands for their cowardice ; while the men, falling on the women, declared that they had been the hindrances to their fighting. In the midst of the universal disorganization, Jean Chouan and his little band stood their ground through a murderous fire from the Blues, and, under cover of a thick fog, succeeded in driving them back.

A moment's breathing-time was thus gained, and a brief

interval for consultation ; and the glory of having saved La Vendée was unanimously awarded to Jean Chouan. The Prince de Talmont, wishing to give some proof of his gratitude to his faithful follower, signed a deed on that very day, granting to him and his descendants in perpetuity, *permission to cut as much wood as they might want in the forests on his estates*—a recompense alike characteristic of him who gave and him who had chosen it. The prince, who at that moment could not command even a clean shirt, and whose possessions were all confiscated, disposes of his property for all time ; and Jean Chouan, the hero of the fight, the deliverer of the host, thinks of a provision for the hearth of his posterity as the all-sufficient reward of his valour.

The destruction, which the last victory had only postponed, overtook the flying Vendée, a few days later, in Mans. The streets and squares of the city were blocked up by the dense masses of women and children, sick and wounded, unarmed and despairing, and the cattle and waggons completed the confusion, and made extrication hopeless. The Blues made a simultaneous attack upon all the gates, where the little remnant of the followers of the chiefs withstood them with the most determined valour. Jean Chouan availed himself of a momentary pause at the post he was defending, to run back to the city to look after his mother.

Our Va-de-bon-cœur accompanied him. They found the old woman seated on the ground in the market-place. François Cottereau, with his head sunk upon his breast, lay wounded before her, and she was holding his hands between hers, that were folded in prayer. *La pauvre donzelle* was kneeling beside him, endeavouring to assuage his sufferings by chanting her sweet plaintive ditties in his ear.

At the sight of this, which was but one of many such groups, Va-de-bon-cœur was so much overcome, that he could

not advance a step farther. Jean had contrived to procure two horses, and he now implored his mother and Susanne to make use of them to escape ; but before they could determine on this, the storming of the gates was renewed with increased fury. Jean tore himself away, and hastened to his post, calling out as he threw his musket over his shoulder—

“Be quick, be quick, mother ! and if God will, we shall yet meet again at *les Poiriers* !”

The enemy now soon forced an entrance. Night was approaching, and Jean and others defended themselves from house to house, till at last Prince de Talmont interposed, and commanded him to think of his own safety. All was lost ; the gates were broken down ; the enemy masters of the place. Jean assembled his followers, brought them out of the town in safety, and then returned to assure himself that the prince had escaped. Satisfied on this point, he rejoined his people ; and by his thorough acquaintance with all the tracks and by-ways of the country, led them back, without interruption, to the forest of Misdon.

Once in the still shelter of the forest, and released from the fearful struggle and din, which for many previous days had not left them half an hour’s repose, the feverish excitement, which had hitherto kept up even the wounded, gave way. They cast themselves on the straw upon the floor of their huts without speaking, and slept soundly for four-and-twenty hours. When they awoke, their first feeling was a joyous consciousness of escape from imminent danger. It was night, and they held a sort of muster, while one called aloud the names of all who, but a few days before, had left this hiding-place. To the name of many a faithful comrade, proved in peril and in battle, there came no answer, unless some eyewitness of his fate announced him as “dead,” “dead,” “dead,” “prisoner.” About forty were found to have survived, and

of these many were wounded, some severely. The care of those, and above all, the thought of the future, occupied them. The latter looked hopeless enough: the Blues would overrun the country, and soon no place of refuge would be safe from them.

A long and gloomy silence followed these explanations. Even Miellette, whom a ball through the ankle could not deprive of his jest, now strove in vain to raise the spirits of his brethren. Suddenly the voice of song was heard in the distance; it came nearer and nearer, and was soon recognised as that of *la pauvre donzelle*. They sprang from the ground to go forward and meet her in the pale moonlight. What a sight of horror met their eyes! There indeed was Susanne, her hair hanging loose about her shoulders, barefooted and almost naked, and pale as the dead, leading a white horse by the bridle; in the saddle, one whose face was covered with clotted blood sat stiff and erect, still holding in his right hand a sabre, as in act to strike. Jean Chouan recognised his brother François, and called to him; but the figures passed noiselessly before him, like some spectral apparition, and soon were on the other side of the narrow but bottomless swamp that bordered the forest, so that they could only be reached by making a circuit round it. The song, taken up again by the poor wanderer, now echoed sadly through the masses of the dark forest; and for a while the men, even the bravest and boldest of them, stood as if spell-bound. Jean was the first to shake off the ghostly terror, and hasten after them. As he came up, and called to them again, Susanne exclaimed—

“Here we are; save him!—O save poor François!”

These were the last words of perfect consciousness that she ever spoke, and as she uttered them she fell to the ground. Terror, grief, and weariness, with hunger and thirst, had de-

prived her of her senses. Jean now turned to her companion, and asked for their mother; but François answered not a word. His look was vacant, and his teeth were set.

After he had lifted his brother from the horse, which was no easy matter, and bound up his wounds as well as he could, the poor girl came to herself, and Jean brought both into the hut, and made a further attempt to gain some information as to the fate of his mother. But François continued speechless; and Susanne's whole mind seemed possessed by an old song, which, in that night of terror and of flight, she had sung over and over again to the wounded man, as containing her whole provision of words and thoughts of comfort. Her answers were imperfect, and interrupted by snatches of the song.

"Where is mother left, Susanne?—think for a moment, poor child!" said Jean soothingly.

"Under there!" replied the girl, looking him full in the face. "Don't you know about it? under there, with all the others. The cannon, and the waggons, and the cattle, and—and the Blues, were in the middle of us, and—and—and—

Le petit point-du-jour arrive,  
Arrive, arrivera"—

"Well, Susanne, and what became of mother in the morning?"

"Now, the widow—the old, old lady—they threw her down, and the oxen and the waggons went over her; and—

A la porte de sa mère  
Trois petits coups frappèrent—

And because her pain was so great, your mother—the widow, Jean—how she implored our lads to make an end of her! But the poor youths said, 'Nay, mother'—they said—what happened then? No, that's not to be known! the good God may not—you know the good God, Jean?—He would not

have allowed it. And then your mother said it was well ; and—and—

Si vous dormez, réveillez vous,  
C'est votre amant qui parle à vous."

"And François did not save our mother ?" cried Jean in a heart-rending tone, and wringing his hands bitterly ; while the strong man's frame was shaken by the violence of his emotion. "François stood by and did nothing!"

"François ! François !"

The name seemed in some degree to recall her senses, and she spoke for a few minutes more coherently.

"Yes, poor François ! he took the horse's bridle between his teeth, and drew his pistol and his sabre, and threw himself upon the Blues ; and—

N'est-il pas temps de l'oublier  
Le beau galant du temps passé."

Susanne's mind now wandered again ; and it was not till she had hummed in a low voice several verses of the ballad, that she continued—

"Ah, what a deal of trouble I had with François—your brother, Jean. It was so hard to find him under all the Blues ; but at last I got him on the horse, and brought him home with the song that he was always so fond of—

Toujours, toujours dedans, mes chants  
J'irai pleurant et regrettant."

But all Jean's further trouble and patience were thrown away on the maiden, who was by this time quite incapable of any further coherent effort. His brother lay motionless and insensible ; only when his mother's name was mentioned, a convulsive shudder passed over his ghastly features, and a flash of anger for a moment lighted up his glazing eye, and then he sank back into total unconsciousness.

Jean Chouan still bore up amid all these horrors ; his heart

was but braced by them ; and since he had not been able to save his mother, his first thought now was to avenge her.

His next care was to provide a safe retreat for his men. For this purpose he caused pits to be dug in the deepest recesses of the forest, the entrances to which he closed by strong hurdles covered over with turf and moss, which might over-grow them, so as to obliterate all trace of the removal of the earth. Here they were sheltered, first from the cold, and, moreover, so effectually from their enemies, that they often heard the Blues tramping over their heads, without the least suspicion of being so near the objects of their search. Provisions were not wanting to them ; but it was with the greatest difficulty and danger that they could procure powder and shot. And it was generally Jean Chouan himself, who crept into the towns beleaguered by the Republicans, and brought back a store of these.

One day, as he was returning from one of these adventurous expeditions to Laval, and was dividing the powder in one of the excavations a little apart from the rest, he saw Miellette, whom he had despatched to Bourgneuf, returning breathless and in great agitation.

"What, ho there ! Gas-menton," he called from afar ; "you will have need for all your powder to-day!"

"What's the matter?" said Jean calmly, while he continued his occupation.

"What's the matter?" The matter is that the prince is taken!"

At these words Jean sprang from the ground, where he had been seated, as though he had suddenly gone mad.

"Give me my musket!" he exclaimed, after hearing that the Prince de Talmont had been betrayed at Bazonyes, whence the Blues had brought him to Ernée, where his trial would be made short work of.

" Give me my musket, Miellette," he repeated, filling his pockets with cartridges the while; " I must be off to Ernée."

" But the place is full of Blues!"

" All the better; I am the more likely to see what they are about."

" You will but fall into their hands yourself; you cannot possibly escape them."

" *There is no fear!*" said Jean; and his comrade knowing well his last word, tried no longer to dissuade him, and he set off; while Miellette cursed himself and his stars for having brought him the evil tidings.

For two whole days nothing was heard of their leader, and his men began to give him up for lost. At the end of that time he reappeared, with his musket under his arm. He had discovered that the prince was then at Rennes, but that he was to be sent to Laval for trial, or, in other words, execution. Jean had planned and proposed everything accordingly. He had summoned all his followers to rendezvous for the rescue at Buis-de-l'Aulne, between Gravelle and Laval, on the way from Rennes. All was fixed except the hour; of this Jean was every moment expecting intelligence, and till he received it, not a man must stir from his place.

Miellette handed to him a scrap of dirty paper, which had just been left with *friends* in the neighbouring village, by a beggar, who gave no message with it. But neither Jean nor Miellette, nor any of the band, could read writing. Yes, there was Godeau the learned.

" Here away with you, *Dominus Vobiscum*," shouted Miellette; " come and show us for once that learning may be turned to some account."

Godeau came slowly and with dignity, took the paper, looked at it with an air of importance; turned it over, shook

his head, and finally declared that there were no intelligible characters, and that the paper had been merely scribbled over as a trick played off to mislead them.

Whereupon Jean crumpled the paper together, and put it into his pocket, and lay down again with his followers to watch. But when that day, and another, and another passed over without tidings, Jean became so restless and impatient that he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep ; and at last, unable longer to endure this suspense, he started off to gain intelligence himself at Saint Ouen.

Soon, however, he was seen returning, with hasty strides, and with a look and manner such as his followers had never before seen.

“ Where is Godeau ? ” he exclaimed in a voice of thunder.

Godeau came slowly forward ; he was evidently distrustful. But Jean sprang towards him, seized him by the collar, and, shaking his massive frame till every joint cracked—

“ So, you are the villain who was to read these lines to me ! ” roared Jean in his ear. “ You said that the paper was only scrawled with unmeaning scratches. Tell me now, is there any word written there or not, dog as you are ! ”

“ I—I—there is nothing that I could make out.”

“ Make out, indeed ! but I have made out that the prince was taken to Laval two days agone, and—this was in the paper—and—and now the Prince de Talmont is dead ! Do you hear me, scoundrel ? —*dead, dead, dead !* ”

Then turning to his followers—

“ What did you promise me ? What was to be the reward of treachery ? ”

“ A bullet through the head ! ” said many, speaking together.

“ You know, then, what to do with this miscreant ; and do it *speedily* ! ” And so saying, he pushed the unhappy man into the midst of them.

While they were binding the eyes of the culprit, he kept screaming like a madman that he was no traitor; although to Miellette's logical and apt question if indeed he could read, he still replied in the affirmative, and offered the weakest and most evasive apologies, still swearing by every saint in the calendar, little and great, that a traitor he was not. He now strove and struggled with demoniac strength, and would by no means submit to his fate. At last, seeing that he could not be persuaded to kneel, Miellette, who superintended the execution, ordered him to be thrown down on his back; the muskets were levelled at his breast, the triggers clicked, and—

"Can you read? for the last time!" asked Miellette.

"No!" was the reply wrung by the very agony of death. Rather than give up the reputation he had hitherto enjoyed for learning, the miserable man had thus, out of mere vanity, played off the trick, of which he had so little foreseen the cost.

"So then, *Dominus Vobiscum*," said Miellette, striking up the muskets, "you have lied to us like a Judas! and to maintain your cursed conceit, the Prince de Talmont must bite the dust! But still, you are no traitor. Off with you, then, and hide yourself as you may! Only don't cross Jean's path; he would shoot you as he would a mad dog."

Immersed in fresh sorrows, Jean forgot to inquire about Godeau. His brother François died of his wounds, and was buried, with imminent risk, in the family burying-place in the churchyard of Olivet. Henceforth, *la pauvre donzelle*, whose mind had never been restored, was in no way to be kept from the grave. She had established herself under the shelter of the little porch at the entrance, and spent the greater part of the day kneeling beside the grave, either praying, or singing some plaintive ballad in a sweet low

voice. This was a token to the Republicans both of the death and resting-place of François. They disinterred the body, cut off the head, and stuck it on a long pole, with this inscription : “*The head of the famous Cottreau, leader of the Chouans in Lower Maine.*” It was then borne in triumph to Gravelle, and there erected in the place of public execution. Susanne had seen all this, and no word had passed her lips ; even her song was quenched. She had followed the rabble rout to Gravelle ; and when the pole had been securely fixed in the ground, she had seated herself close by it. The sentinels of the party desired her to be off ; and as she gave no heed to their bidding, they shot her where she sat.

All these particulars Jean had heard from his youngest brother René, who up to this period had occupied himself but little with passing events : to secure his homestead and his property was his first object. In spite of this, he was seized and imprisoned as “suspect ;” and when he was permitted to return to his little domain, it was to find his house plundered, his orchard and fields laid waste. This was the work of the *Contre-Chouans*, as they were called,—a band of wretches who, under pretext of discovering Chouans, overran the district as plunderers. The sight of his devastated farm had filled René’s heart with a burning thirst for vengeance. He desired his wife to gather together the few scattered relics of their property, and to follow him ; and taking his musket from beneath the hearthstone, where it is the custom of the peasants to conceal it, he departed for the forest of Misdon.

“That is all that the villains have left me !” he exclaimed, as he met his brother, and pointed to the bundle that his wife was carrying ; “but may I be a beggar to the end of my life, if for every dollar’s worth that the rogues have stolen or spoiled I do not bring down a Blue !”

René did not lack opportunities to redeem his pledge. Jean

himself was brought, by all this misery, into a state of feverish restlessness—a rabid craving for the excitement of bloodshed; and scarcely a day passed over without some encounter. Now he would attack the Blues in their quarters; now he would rescue a band of Royalists; now he fell upon a convoy, or emptied the coffers of the receiving officers. Along the whole of the border on either side, Maine or Breton, not a place, not an hour was secure from an inroad of the Chouans. The engagements at Rouge-feu, Bourgon, St. Marais, Grand-Mail, St. Ouen, and so forth, followed quickly on each other; and almost always the advantage remained with the Chouans.

The impetuous bravery of René was manifested on all occasions. *Va-de-bon-cœur* declared that his musket would go off of its own accord whenever a Blue was within range; but he manifested also an insatiable thirst for blood, and a most inexorable cruelty. He abused women, and shot down unarmed travellers, merely on account of their wearing the tricolour cockade, and would spare neither the wounded nor the prisoners. He declared that it was his greatest pleasure to cut down patriots by handfuls. His covetousness, which nevertheless only added fuel to his fury, often rendered him almost ridiculous. When, as was not unfrequently the case, it was necessary to burn the booty which there were no means of bringing away, he would crouch beside the fire, like the wolf at the sheepfold, seeking to rescue a portion—bemoaning the loss of such treasures, and storming against the patriots for hindering good Christian people in their enjoyment of them.

Jean, on the contrary, was opposed to all needless blood-shedding, was severe against all acts of violence committed in cold blood, and prevented them whenever he could; but the increasing ferocity and exasperation of the men at length rendered this interference ineffectual. René's prowess gave

him unbounded influence ; and his atrocious cruelties did not give serious offence to any, while by many they were imitated. It was in vain that Jean frequently took away his brother's weapons : René was sure to find a musket ready to his hand, to carry on his *dollar-reckoning* with the Blues.

One day, the Chouans were lying in ambush near Genit, but René, thirsting for blood, could not rest, and set off in search of spoil. He soon saw a man creeping through the underwood, and without asking any questions, shot him on the spot. Jean and the rest, who had been overcome by sleep, started up, and ran to the place to find one of their most trusty spies—who, at the peril of his life, was bringing them a sackful of cartridges and flints, of which they were in urgent need—weltering in his blood. But what raised Jean Chouan's grief and anger to the highest pitch was that the victim was none other than that coachman of the Prince de Talmont who had driven his mother to meet the king.

“Wretched man !” he said to René, turning upon him, “there is too much of innocent blood that already cries against our name. You shall atone for this to God in heaven !”

But before he could discharge his weapon, Michael Crivier snatched it from him, and the rest of his followers fell upon him and held him fast.

“Disarm your leader ?” shouted Jean, aroused to fury.

“No, Jean,” rejoined Crivier calmly and seriously ; “but we will have no Cain among us.”

These words were more powerful with Jean than his wrath. He raised a cry of horror, hid his face in his hands, and rushing into the thicket threw himself upon his knees, and it was long before he could be pacified.

In spite of the frequent recurrence of similar scenes of terror, the Chouans were not without bright moments. When, after long and fruitless searching of the forest, the Blues had

for a brief space departed from the immediate neighbourhood, and the sun shone bright and clear, the Chouans would come out of their holes, and assemble in a meadow in one of the clearings, and there, on the banks of a running stream, enjoy themselves in song and dance, after the manner of the country. As the swelling tones were borne on the wind to the surrounding hamlets, now inhabited only by women, these would come to the doors of their cottages to listen, and shuddering, whisper to each other—

“The lads are gay to-night; how many of them will be there to-morrow?”

If, in their hasty and frequent night-marches, the Chouans came to a church that had not been spoiled of its bells—a rare event, even the vicinity of Blues would not prevent their allowing themselves the enjoyment of once more hearing the sounds they loved so well. They would ring the *Angelus*, amid cries and tears of joy, and kneel in fervent prayer around the church, till warned away by the urgency of the peril.

Jean Chouan no longer took part in those merry moments. The perpetual shedding of blood was a horror to him; and the recent encounter with his brother weighed heavily upon his spirits. Once, when a convoy for which they were lying in wait, came within range of shot, and all were impatiently expecting the word to fire, he gave the strictest orders that no one should fire, and suffered the unconscious Blues to pass without molestation. To the loud murmurs of his people, he replied—

“The Cottereaux have taken the lives of but too many of God’s creatures, and the righteous Lord will take vengeance on them for this.”

The words were almost prophetic. The sisters, Perrine and Renée Cottreau, who had hitherto lived quietly at the

farm, were soon after this taken to prison, and then brought to Bourgneuf, where they were to be transferred, with many others, to Laval. There could be no doubt of the sentence. Jean at once resolved to rescue them at all hazards. But the greater number of his men were absent, or wounded, and he could only collect about twenty. He caused these to swear *by their portion in paradise*, that they would shed the last drop of their blood in order to deliver the sisters.

The little band lay in ambush in the forest of Durondais. Jean, whose calmness and self-possession had never before been known to fail, now trembled so that he could scarcely speak. He reminded his men of the love he had deserved from them, and entreated their prayers for him and his. Time passed ; Jean went backwards and forwards, continually looking for intelligence ; but nothing was to be seen or heard of the escort with the prisoners. It rained in torrents, and the poor fellows stood knee-deep in water in their hiding-place. Jean ceased not, with streaming tears, to exhort every man separately to perseverance.

“ We will rescue the poor girls, will we not ? You cannot forsake me now ? ” he would say, over and over again, to each.

“ While *you* hold out, *we* shall,” was the reply of his faithful comrades, and further they spoke not.

The rain now increased, the water rose higher, and the cold was piercing, and for four-and-twenty hours they had taken no refreshment. As the second night began to draw on, Jean, touched with compassion for his devoted followers, bade them return to the shelter of Misdon.

“ The weather must have detained the Blues ; to-morrow we rendezvous here again.”

They accordingly retired, while he himself, urged by dark forebodings, hurried to Bourgneuf, there to get tidings of the

prisoners. He heard that they had been taken to Laval by a circuitous route, and hastened back to the forest of Misdon to take counsel with the faithful Miellette, who was his blood relation. Miellette had a peculiar aptitude in disguising himself, so as to personate without risk of discovery an infinite variety of characters. In the dress of a peasant woman, he now made his way through the midst of the soldiers to Laval. On his return, he was so far overcome by emotion, that he staggered into the cave where Jean was watching for him without being conscious of his presence. The deathlike pallor of his face, and the misery depicted in his heretofore cheerful countenance, told all.

"They have murdered them?" screamed Jean wildly.

"Yes; but the maidens have not disgraced you," replied the other; and then proceeded to relate all that he had witnessed, without being able to interpose.

Renée, who was barely sixteen, had at first wept a little, and could not walk forward when she was brought out to the guillotine; but her sister had supported her, and whispered softly in her ear that "she should strive to die without making much ado." Perrine then assisted her on to the scaffold and under the axe, that the poor child might be spared the horror of seeing *her* die. This over, she stepped bravely forward, and calmly, "as she were going to church," and calling aloud "Long live the king! long live my brother Jean Chouan!" she laid her own head beneath the axe. Scarcely had it fallen, when Miellette had rushed forwards, and dipped his handkerchief in the blood of the sisters; and this handkerchief he now presented, as a sacred memorial, to their brother.

Jean had listened to the relation in gloomy silence, and now thanked his true-hearted comrade with a nod, while he took the bloody token from his hand and hid it in his breast. He said not a word, and he shed no tear; but from that mo-

ment, my informant assured me, he was never seen to smile, nor indeed to speak, except when he was constrained to give orders. He would not take any part in the gathering of the Royalist leaders in Lower Maine, nor would he head any other enterprise. To all entreaties, he only replied—

“They must not be involved in my misfortunes.”

At last, Jean, with his few surviving followers, was surprised by the Blues in a farm-house—La Babinière. Most of them contrived to escape, as did Jean himself; but on hearing the screams of his sister-in-law, René's wife, he returned, rescued her from the enemy, and helped her over a ditch, which he held against the Blues till she had time to effect her escape. Then, pierced by many balls, he fell; but he had strength enough left to drag himself into a neighbouring thicket, where he was wrapped in a coverlet and carried by his men to the forest of Misdon. He lived, in inexpressible agony, till the next day, and made use of his failing strength to the very last moment in exhorting the rest to steadfastness; urging them to choose Louis Triton, called Jambe d'Argent, whom he esteemed as the ablest among them, for his successor; and speaking words of comfort and of counsel to each.

His last look was so joyous, so full of love and submission, and so inspiriting, that *Va-de-bon-cœur* could not even now, in his old age, allude to it without tears.

“He died as God's saints die,” said the old man—with these words closing the narrative of events, in which he had himself played so conspicuous a part.

The Chouans were now anxious to preserve the body of their much-loved leader from exposure to the same indignities which had been offered to that of his brother François. With this object, they dug a grave of unusual depth in one of the most secret recesses of the forest; and there, amid tears and prayers, they deposited the corpse. They then filled up the

grave, carefully stamping down the earth, so that there might be no possibility of a sinking ; replacing the turf, which they watered plentifully, and strewing dry leaves over the surface, so that it was scarcely to be distinguished.

Such was the end of this remarkable man, who gave his name to a burgher-war, of which General Hoche, to whom pertained the glory of terminating it, said—“*That all other warfare was mere child’s-play when compared with it!*”

Jean Chouan’s peculiar greatness consisted especially in its limitations. He never, either in feeling, idea, interest, or effort, stepped beyond the narrow circle of which he formed a part. With him, all was direct, individual, personal. His sphere was circumscribed as compared with his abilities, and thus his death had little influence on the war. It was carried on by many others, who, if less gifted and less honoured, still kept up the struggle in the same mode, and with varying results, under the name of *Chouannerie*.



## THE VIRGIN'S GOD-CHILD.

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THE Bay of Douarnenez, enclosed as it is by the two rocky peninsulas of Kelerne and Crozon, which leave only a narrow passage out into the open sea, belongs to those portions of the coast of Brittany which make the deepest impression upon a traveller possessed of taste and sympathy for such scenery. Its charm does not, however, consist in what is generally called the beautiful, or the romantic. There are along this coast many wilder, sublimer, more romantic, and more beautiful points. But that which exercises so peculiar an influence here, is doubtless the complete unity of style, if one may use such an expression, the harmony of the whole, and of every detail, down to the very moss which hangs from the rocks, partaking, as they all do, of one and the same grave, severe, gloomy, and mysterious character. Yet this coast-scene is preserved from a dull monotony by the exquisitely blue waters of the bay, which, though protected indeed from the mighty waves that break upon the rocky promontories outside, yet not only curls beneath the breath of the almost spent wind, and shares the great pulsations of ocean in its ebb and flow,

but is still further animated by as it were a ceaseless breathing, or, in other words, a peculiar, mysterious, perfectly regular, and low-murmuring swelling, and subsiding of its waters. Whatever explanation may be afforded by natural causes dependent upon the formation of the shore, it is certain that the people connect this phenomenon with the tradition, according to which the old Armorician King Gralon still dwells in his glorious magic city, deep down under the surface of the bay.

After a long absence, I revisited this country a few years ago, to recover from the effects of the marrow and bone, the soul and spirit-consuming business of the metropolis. I had wandered away to the northern tongue of land, my whole being open to the impressions conveyed by its scenery, and to the influence of the strengthening sea-breeze which blew over me from both sides, to the left from the bay, to the right from the open sea. Opposite Rostudel, not far from the hamlet of Kerkolleorch, I observed, on my left, a little green dingle which opened out between gray masses of rocks, and led down to the shore of the bay. Below me, the little brook which had given rise to a kindly vegetation around—to grass, bushes, and some low trees, had been, by the help of a few rough, upright stones, converted into a well that a few willows shaded over.

A young peasant-girl sat on a stone near this well, her arm resting upon one of the large red earthen jugs which are universally used in these parts, and have from time immemorial been brought over from the opposite coast of Cornwall, which was once inhabited by a kindred race. I stepped towards her; for even at a distance I was attracted by the peculiar and surprising charm of such an apparition in this lonely and savage spot. She was of a remarkably pure and touching order of beauty, and the simple costume of the district, poor but delicately clean, the blue gown with a broad red border, the

brown kerchief around the head, and which fell over her shoulders and bosom like a pair of wings, the small bare feet, the round arm leaning on the red pitcher—all formed an unspeakably charming *tout ensemble*. She greeted me in the dialect of the country, with so gentle a voice, and such a frank, friendly glance and nod, that I could not resist the temptation to become somewhat better acquainted with her, which would, I knew, in all probability be the result of a little conversation. As I approached, returning her greeting, and wiping away the drops that stood on my brow, she praised the water of the well, and offered me some to drink ; and upon my making a sign of assent, she rose, and, with fascinating grace and alacrity, raised the pitcher to my lips. While I drained long draughts of the pure stream, she held the heavy pitcher, and looked at me with a smile.

As, according to the custom of the country, I thanked her by bidding God bless her, and was about to enter into conversation, a harsh voice broke in—

“The Holy Trinity protect us ! Can it be Dinorah, who, on the open heath, sets up a liquor-shop for the townsfolk ?”

I looked round, and saw a miller of the neighbourhood, whom I knew by sight, sitting upon his sacks, which a strong horse carried without difficulty together with his master, and on his way apparently to one hamlet after another. Under other circumstances he would have been a welcome companion to me, for he knew the country and its inhabitants intimately, and, apart from his self-satisfied, levelling, liberal views, and the spirit of contradiction which he caught from his newspapers—apart, I say, from this, and an utter absence of all feeling for what was deepest, tenderest, and most earnest in the heart of the people, he was by no means a bad sort of man, nay, for every-day life, he might be called a cheerful and useful companion.

At this moment, however, his appearance, and the antagonism between him and such a creature as Dinorah, as well as his discordance with the place, and with all that united to form the mood which he disturbed, were extremely unwelcome to me. Half offended, half embarrassed, I was silent, and turned away, that I might not be tempted to say anything rude to him. But Dinorah did not long owe him an answer.

"Go your ways elsewhere, *Guiller Three-Tongues*," cried she, with a gay and unconstrained laugh. "You are well entitled to the nickname, else you never could speak so much arrant nonsense."

"Come, come, girl, give me at least a drink as well," said he conciliatingly, while he saluted me very politely—for he knew me at once, in spite of my turning away.

"Not I, indeed," replied she tartly. "This is only spring-water for good Christians; such as you want *fire-water*, and that *I* do not sell; so go your ways."

"My way is thine, child; for it so happens that I am taking this flour to Kerkolleorch."

"Except that portion of it which remains behind sticking to the mill-stones—is it not so, *Guiller*?"

I could not help laughing at this allusion to the well-known foible of the miller, or rather at the droll, pert way in which the girl brought it out; but the miller turned to me, and said, with a shrug of his shoulders—

"Monsieur, then, understands the *gour lanchenn* (the bad tongue) already. But who ever would believe it of a little saint that she could be so sharp? I have seen her when she was not higher than her pitcher—when she could not even call me by my name, and now I can get on less well with her than if she were an advocate. That shows plainly enough that when God took the tongue from the serpent He gave it to the woman. I should like to know if she

serves *Bauzec the black* in the same way when he passes by her door."

The miller had evidently touched his fair opponent on a tender point. At all events she was silent, blushed perceptibly, and pulled her head-gear about with some embarrassment. But when he tried to follow up his advantage, she soon found her tongue again, and some light-hearted and harmless bantering was carried on between them for some time longer.

At last, he replied to the reproach of not knowing how to prevent his three tongues from contradicting each other, by an allusion that I did not understand, and which soon put an end to all jesting on the part of Dinorah.

"Well," cried he, "we can't all be the blessed Virgin's god-children—that is only the lot of such little saints as Dinorah."

"Do not mock at holy things, Guiller," said she, with a sudden earnestness of voice, look, and gesture, while raising her pitcher to her head, and preparing to go away.

"Old William\* may burn me black," replied he, "if I meant to mock. Every child in the district knows the story, and if the gentleman has not heard it already, I will tell it him now—

"You must know that the little Dinorah was just born, and was to be, as is right and proper, baptized as soon as possible. All were assembled in the church, and quite ready. The sexton had brought the shell with the salt in it—the priest had put on his stole; they were only waiting for one of the godmothers. At that moment came a messenger out of breath to say that she had suddenly dropped down dead. You may imagine the confusion and distress. It would never do to

\* This is the title given by the peasants of Brittany to the devil—perhaps from a forgotten play upon the name of William the Conqueror.

take the first come for the godmother of such a jewel of a child, and in short she was very near being carried out of the church unbaptized home. At that moment, out of the Chapel of the Holy Virgin Mary, which stands on one side of the choir, there came a wonderfully beautiful lady, dressed in silk and lace, and offered to hold the child for baptism. The priest had nothing to say against it, and all the rest of the party assembled held their breath at the apparition ; and before they rightly knew what had happened to them, our little Dinorah was baptized, and the apparition had vanished again into the chapel.—But pray, sir, do not think of disputing with Dinorah here, or with any of the good folk of this province, as to whether it really was the Blessed Virgin, or a distinguished lady from Paris, who was sketching at that time in the neighbourhood, and hunting out Cromlechs and other antiquities and curiosities. So now you see it was no bad joke of mine, but that it is in good downright earnest that we call Dinorah the little saint, and the Virgin's god-daughter !”

I looked inquiringly at Dinorah, who replied, half in anger and half in embarrassment—

“ Guiller can lie even while telling the truth ; but, however, no one can alter what God willed should happen. The dog may bark at the moon, indeed ; but the moon does not on that account fall from the sky.”

So saying, she went away with a quick step, and soon disappeared behind the rocks.

We took the same way more slowly. The miller went on rattling for some time, but I did not heed him. The little legend I had just heard, had in no way diminished my interest in Dinorah. I knew well that the people in Brittany are always pleased with stories of some wonderful distinction paid to one or other of themselves by the Lord of Heaven, or by some of His saints. Such highly-favoured ones are objects

of pride to a whole district. I had already heard of the widow of a baker of St. Mathieu, whose dough had been kneaded by the archangel Gabriel; and of Lotsen of Batz, to whom the Saviour himself had taught certain words which had the power of guiding a ship safely over the most perilous seas, and through the most terrible storms. But I had held all these stories to be mere jests, and had never yet seen one of these distinguished individuals. Here, however, was a maiden who was evidently fully persuaded that she stood in a peculiar relation to the Queen of Heaven. No one who saw her could doubt the genuineness of such belief on her part; nay, this story alone gave the key to her peculiar bearing—at once lively and dignified, modest, retiring, mysterious, and yet firm, self-possessed, and even daring as it was. Moreover—as Guiller confessed cordially enough, when he found that his light talk found no response in me—though Dinorah was certainly rather too proud of her exalted sponsor, she did her credit by being the most pious, most honourable, and, in short, the best girl in all the country far and near; and if all saints were like her, added he, he would himself think seriously about being converted and trying to get to heaven.

Meanwhile, we had reached one of those cottages standing close by the shore, where the so-called *Gabariers* were wont to live, that they might collect tang, fine sand, and other productions or refuse of the sea, which they sold to potash and glass manufacturers, in order to eke out by these small earnings the fishing, which was their special vocation. But this cottage of which I speak was in far better order than the generality. It was built of granite blocks, pretty regularly arranged, and roofed with large slates. Its situation was sheltered, standing as it did at the opening of a little hollow in the steep banks which rose from behind it, leaving room for a little bit of garden, where herbs, and a few flowers, pro-

tected by a green hedge, seemed to flourish very well. A deep curve of the shore reached to a few steps of the cottage door. The little waves, sparkling in the evening sun, lifted in their play a neat boat on to the snow-white sand of the beach, which was diversified here and there by gay shells. Nets were hanging up to dry upon a neighbouring rock.

Guiller observed to me—

“That’s the home of Dinorah’s father, old Salaunn. And there lies the old man himself,” continued he, laughing, as he pointed out a man asleep in the shadow of a rock, “and repeats the paternoster of St. Do-nothing. These people live as they used to do in Paradise. The sea brings them all they want while they sleep, and they have only got to stretch their hand out to take it in. No doubt he is dreaming at this moment of the great lobster with pearl eyes, and of the bank with silver anchovies; and he is ready to sell his soul to Satan if he will but get him a net made of sand, with which to fish out all these marvels from the depths of the Bay of Douarnenez. I will waken him just in time to prevent the bargain being struck.”

He did this in rather a summary manner; and after a few jokes, both men began to unlade the sacks of flour which the miller had brought. During this process, I engaged the Gabarier to take me in his boat, at the next ebb of the tide, to the cave of Morgate, which was opposite, at the very extremity of the southern point. To while away the short intervening time, I ascended the banks behind the cottage, and delighted myself with the glorious scene presented by the bay: its rocky shores, the wide sea beyond, the promontories and fissures far and near, the hundred sails of small and large vessels traversing the blue expanse in every direction; and all this brightly lighted up by the sun, which already neared the misty horizon.

I was roused out of the dreamy condition into which the scene had plunged me, by the noise that the fisherman and miller made in shutting the cottage-door after they had finished their task. I had begun to descend, but involuntarily stood still as I saw Dinorah come out of the cottage. She had placed her distaff on her hip, and as she went along she whirled the spindle with great speed and accuracy. In the other hand, she held up her apron, in which she seemed to be carrying something or other. She came up the cliff near to where I was standing, behind a projection of rock, and then stood still, a few steps below me. She looked round on every side, raised her hand to the four points of the compass successively, while she pronounced two or three words which I did not understand. She was instantly answered by a loud chirping from the low bushes around, and from every side different kinds of birds—bullfinches, robin-redbreasts, hedge-sparrows, titmice, and many more—flew down to pick up the food she had brought them in her apron, and which she now carefully and lovingly distributed in little handfuls, while, in an under tone, she sang to herself in a strange sort of way.

It was a lovely picture, seen thus in the red glow of evening; and the pure outline of her face, with its rich waves of golden hair around, would certainly have afforded to a painter a most admirable study for the head of a saint.

At length I approached, but she beckoned me away, without, however, evincing the least surprise or embarrassment.

"If Monsieur comes nearer, all my little birdies will fly away, and they are not half satisfied," said she in a whisper, that her *protégés* might not be disturbed by the sound of a strange language.

However, at that moment both the men came noisily out of the cottage, and the little birds dispersed on every side, with a loud twittering, expressive of their alarm and displeasure.

So Dinorah, after having called out a few quieting and sympathizing words after them, found herself obliged to speak to me. In answer to my question, by what means she had contrived thus to tame such shy little creatures, she looked at me in astonishment, and said—

“Why, by the same that attract all God’s creatures—by love; by showing them that one is fond of them. In winter, when they cannot find food for themselves, I strew it for them before our door, and in summer they know me again.”

As she spoke, we reached the cottage, and the miller could not refrain from teasing her a little more.

“The little saint has again given alms to the beggars of the air. No doubt she expects to find one or other amongst them who will bring her tidings from her high and holy godmother.”

Dinorah went into the house, silent, and evidently offended; but old Salaun said gravely—

“And why not, pray? If our fathers have not deceived us, there are birds who know the way to the *upper sea*, and can no doubt carry a message to the blest in Paradise.”

“Well, all I know,” replied the miller, “is that it is just the contrary with my horse and me. We have to find our way to one who comes much nearer to the lost in hell. Or has the devil at last hunted down his prey—*Judock Shipwreck of the Raven-cliff?*”

Salaun, it was plain, wished to avoid giving an answer, and went accordingly towards the boat, remarking that it was high time to think of our expedition. But the name of *Judock* happened to recall to my mind, though indistinctly, certain criminal prosecutions in which I had been engaged. And upon inquiry, the miller convinced me that it was indeed this very man who had been brought before the Court at Brest several years before, charged with heavy crimes, but who had

been acquitted, contrary to the general expectation, owing to some deficiency in the evidence.

"If I only knew," added the miller, "whether the old villain were at home, that he might himself receive his flour from me, and make no more ado about it, I would rather"—here he interrupted himself. "But there comes his boy—*Bauzec the black*—and he can give us the surest information, if he but choose to do so."

The new-comer was a young lad in the very poorest dress of the district. His thick, unkempt, rough, coal-black hair fell like a mane over his shoulders. In his right hand, he held a long cudgel, which, with strength and agility, he swung round in circles; while his left hand clutched with fierce grasp the sack which he carried on his shoulders. His features, as well as his expression, wore no trace of the old Armorican type—had about them nothing of its sad, severe earnestness, and indomitable fidelity. There was evidently the wild, cunning, gipsy character about the dark contracted features, and the bright, deeply-cut eyes. In short, there was something in his whole appearance that awakened dislike as well as fear.

When he saw that he was observed, he stopped for an instant in his rapid walk, and seemed doubtful as to whether or not he would turn back. But just at that moment Dinorah happened to come to the door, busied with her spindle, and looking down.

As soon as he saw her, he came on again, but so slowly, that the miller more than once called upon him to make haste, adding, that in general he was light-footed enough, otherwise there would have been an end of his light feet long ago, and he would have had a couple of pounds of iron hung upon them. When the lad had come within a few steps of us, he stood still again, and cast furtive glances—differing, however,

wonderfully in expression—first at us, and then at Dinorah. The miller then asked him if Judock was at home. He made no answer till Dinorah repeated the question, when he slowly said—

“He only can know that who comes from the Ravens’ Cliff.”

“And thou, lad, comest as usual,” said the fisherman, advancing towards us from his boat, “only from some place or other thou shouldest not come from, and which no one asks thee about.”

“Where should he come from, indeed, but from some poaching expedition?” suggested the miller. “Let us see what your booty is to-day—fruit or roots, fish or flesh!”

And so saying, he was going to snatch at the sack, but the youth looked at him in such a way, and made such an expressive motion with the cudgel, that the miller, strong as he was, drew back, with an exclamation that called forth the interposition of Dinorah.

“Bauzec comes from the downs,” she calmly said; “I saw him wandering about there an hour or so ago.”

“He has been hunting with the gentry. I have met him out with them before now,” exclaimed Guiller spitefully.

“And why not?” replied the youth in a tone of defiance. “Here is my gun, which never fails, and here my sporting dog, which never loses scent of the game,” added he triumphantly, as he swung round his cudgel, and opened his sack a little, out of which peeped a little white, hairy head, with small, red eyes, and a pointed and blood-stained little nose.

“A ferret!” exclaimed Salaun; “no wonder, then, that the gentry complain that they can hardly get a roasted rabbit out of all their rabbit-warrens.”

“Bauzec grinned with delight at this acknowledgment of

his heroic deeds. He fumbled in his bag, and brought out four fine rabbits, on whose white breasts the little track of blood showed where the ferret had sucked their veins. That little creature evinced a strong fellow-feeling with its master, looking complacently upon its victims, and licking its lips and whiskers with its small red tongue.

To the miller's question as to whether he was willing to sell them, Bauzec replied—

“Not here; I shall get a better price for them at the tavern in Crozon, as well as a glass of fire-water into the bargain.”

So saying, he replaced his booty in the bag, lingered for a moment or two as if in indecision, and then prepared to leave without any further salutation. But he suddenly recollected himself, drew one of the rabbits out of the bag again, and threw it at Dinorah's feet, with the bold yet shy manner of a rough youth, who would willingly be gallant but does not know how.

“It is the finest of them,” muttered he; “the little saint may keep it if she will.”

Dinorah looked at him gravely, almost severely. But her father pushed away the present with his foot, and said rudely—“Take thy game along with thee, lad; we only receive presents from Christian people.”

Bauzec shrank back, and for a moment appeared discomfited; but he soon regained his savage air of defiance. He uttered a sort of hissing sound, which might pass for a laugh of contempt, took up his bag again, and with a few strides vanished behind a projection of the rocks.

The miller, meanwhile, had picked up the rabbit, and said that his conscience was not so tender; and that, if they despised the dainty roast it would make, it would do nicely for him.

He then prepared to join Bauzec, as he had to go to the Ravens' Cliff. I resolved to accompany him; for I was curious to make the personal acquaintance of this Judock, whose innocence as to the charges already referred to had always appeared to me something more than doubtful, while their nature had left on my mind a picture of a remarkable and original villain. The fisherman promised, though evidently with some reluctance, to bring the boat round for me to Ravens' Cliff at the proper time. I took a short farewell of Dinorah, but found her far more silent and reserved than she had been at first; and went on my way, accompanied by the miller.

"Yon will find Judock an odd sort of saint," said my companion, in his obtrusive way; "or rather, I should say, no saint at all, but a regular limb of Satan, with whose sins and crimes one could fill up the whole way between Camaret and Crozon. For twenty years he lit false lights from Loquirnk to Trévignon, and has had more to do with shipwrecks upon this coast than the south-west wind itself."

I asked whether this creditable occupation enriched its pursuer.

"One cannot exactly tell," rejoined Guiller; "he lives in his den yonder as poorly as a *Klasker-bara*—a bread-seeker, as we call beggars about here. But the question is, whether his miserliness be not greater than all his other vices. Many believe that he has tons of buried gold. And besides, he gains something every now and then as a flayer and rope-maker; and on that account, too, the people look askance at him as anything but a Christian, and aver that he is a *Kakous*."

After an hour's good walk, as we followed a bend of the down, we came in sight of Judock's hut. It was built into a small and narrow fissure in the rocks, and stood close to the

shore. The natural walls thus afforded, the moss-grown flagstones that formed its roof, and whose broad crevices were stuffed up with sea-tang, held together by strong fir-branches, rendered it difficult to distinguish the dwelling from the rocks around, and the sea-produce strewn upon them. Everything was barren, rude, and inhospitable-looking. Some pointed piles of bones lay about, and the projecting roof of the gable had two or three horses' skulls nailed to it—a decoration worthy of the whole.

Judock sat at his door, busied with some old cordage, which he was pulling to pieces. He was a little, thin, shrivelled old man, with a large bald head. The prevailing hue of his face was almost brick-coloured, but in the countless wrinkles the skin was lighter; and as these wrinkles widened more or less at every change of feature, or when he spoke, they gave him a strange repulsive appearance, and made a varying and confusing impression upon the beholder. His restless, piercing glance, his beak-like nose, his low forehead, his toothless mouth, his under jaw in constant motion,—all completed a picture, which only answered too well to the opinion that I had already formed of him.

As soon as he saw me he started, and furtively watched all my movements with visible unrest and suspicion. But he pretended not to observe me.

"Now then, old sinner," said Guiller to him at last, "canst thou not give God's blessing and the good-day to this gentleman?"

"What is the nobleman seeking for on this coast?" was the ungracious answer, spoken in an under tone.

"Ay, what indeed?—old Judock, perhaps," said the miller, laughing.

At these words Judock sprang up, and seemed doubtful whether to flee or to defend himself. I however soon calmed

him, by assuring him that I was only a lover of rock and ocean, and that I had a boat ready to take me to see the cave. Without returning me any answer, he seized the sack of flour that Guiller had brought, and carried it into the hut. No sooner had I crossed the threshold, however, than Judock let his burden fall, and gave a loud scream.

"He here!" exclaimed he, with an expression of extremest amazement. "The saints be gracious to me! how has *he* got in?"

The intruder was Bauzec, who, to all appearance quite unconcerned, sat upon the hearth and roasted potatoes in the ashes.

"Why," observed the miller, showing himself upon the door-sill, "you have not left more than one hole to your palace; how could he have got in otherwise than by it, old boy?"

"No, no; the door was shut, and I—but I must ferret out how this vermin crept in here without my knowledge, or"—

He raised his hand threateningly against the lad, who, however, replied calmly, and with an ironical emphasis upon the expression—

"Why, my *dear father*, does not the wind find its way in without asking your leave, and why should not your dear little son do the same?"

"Only hear him, the young imp!" exclaimed the old man, half angrily and half piteously. "He himself confesses that he has slipped in here to rob his poor old father!"

"Eh, father dear!" continued the youth in the same mocking tone; "so there *is* then something to rob you of, and people are not so far wrong—eh?"

That last sentence was too much for the old man. He seized an iron implement which lay at hand, and rushed upon Bauzec; but with a laugh he slipped away from him, and out

at the door, with cat-like agility. The old man followed, but he very soon returned out of breath, apparently without having effected anything. He spent himself in asseverations respecting his poverty, his age, and his wretchedness; the untruth, and indeed impossibility, of any reports to the contrary; the bad-heartedness and ingratitude of the "vermin," as he called his well-educated son.

The miller put an end to the repulsive garrulity of the old man—whose mind was actually weakened by the alarm given to his covetousness—by reminding him of the payment due, and of the glass of brandy that was to accompany it. But he could only bring him to the point by the positive threat of no longer grinding for him.

At last the boat of old Salaun touched the shore, and he called out to me that there was no time to lose. I was glad to leave the inhospitable hut and its owner, and the miller too, whose manner towards the old man was disagreeable to me. So I soon found myself sitting in the boat, and gave myself up to the strange and sublime scenes that shore and sea afforded me, as we rowed to the outlet of the bay. Salaunn had made visible haste to push off from the shore, and had at first exerted all his energies to get away as fast as possible out of sight of the Kakous' hut.

His exertions, and the anxious look that he cast towards the cloudless horizon, induced me at last to ask him whether we had a sudden squall to apprehend.

"Ask them who cause such, sir; it would not be the first storm that has come from that quarter in perfectly still weather," said he significantly, while he pointed to the direction where stood the dwelling of the Kakous.

And strange enough, at that very moment, a light white cloud rose from the point in question, and spread out to the horizon. But I soon convinced myself that it must be smoke,

and concerned myself no further about the matter, seeing that the Gabarier, to my query as to how a fire could take place on so nearly uninhabited a coast, merely replied by shrugs of the shoulders, and other strange gestures. And besides this, we had now reached the vicinity of the Grotto of Morgate, where Nature claimed and absorbed all my attention.

I let the conversation drop, and soon we glided through the narrow entrance into the cave, whose noble dome—looking, in the wonderfully blue light, as if it were built of sapphires—rose suddenly upon the astonished and bewildered sight. This cave certainly surpasses the so much more widely famed blue Grotto of Capri; and this particular point, as well as the whole coast indeed, possesses in a much higher degree than those southern shores, the charm of ancient local traditions and national songs.

These are for the most part connected, in this district, with the mythic King Grallon-Mawr (Grallon the Great), and with the magic Princess Morgane, or Margate, who, as is well known, occupies so prominent a portion in the legends and lays of Arthur's round table.

Nothing was wanting but a hint on my part to induce my companion, who had been hitherto so monosyllabic, to set off fluently upon these subjects.

His favourite tradition—the scene of which, moreover, was, he asserted, this very grotto—appeared to be the story of the fair Genossa, which is also preserved in an old national song (*Guerz*) of Brittany.\*

Genossa was the daughter of a mighty lord, who lived in the castle whose giant ruins are still shown on the island of Rozan, at the mouth of the Laber. Genossa lived without

\* It is well known that the distinguished Villemarqué has published a collection, in two volumes, of similar national lyrics, under the title, *Barzas-Briez, chants populaires de la Bretagne*, which have also been translated by Ad. Keller, and others whose names have escaped my memory. But the legend of Genossa is not amongst them.

God, and without a wish. Her father let her grow up as do the flowers of the field, and no priest had ever approached the island, which was devoted to the Evil Spirit. Sitting upon a snow-white cow with golden horns, she wandered all the day long through the meadows and woods that lay around the shore, catching in her silken net the birds on the wing.

One day she chanced to meet a beautiful young man upon a black bull with silver horns. His approach thrilled her through and through. He spoke such wondrously sweet words to her, that she was bewitched by them. The black bull and the white cow walked so closely together, and so slowly, that they could crop the grass at their feet, and pull at the same flowers; and the blended sound of their hoofs echoed like music in the heart of Genossa.

The fisherman had at first told the tale in his own way, and with sundry pauses; but soon the words of the old ditty fell from him in their original form, and he continued without interruption, in a strange half-chanting, half-reciting tone—

“ It seemed to Genossa as though every tree were hung around with wreaths of flowers, and sweet bird-notes sprung from under every leaf, and the sea-breezes were laden with incense-like perfume. Genossa met the handsome man on the black bull more than once, and ever his magic power grew stronger and stronger over her. She soon thought and wished only what the stranger wished and thought. And so it came to pass that one day the white cow returned to the castle alone, and Genossa sat behind the stranger upon the black bull with the silver horns. The lord of the island of Rozan, however, gathered all his men together in pursuit, each bearing in one hand a sword, and in the other a dagger. For this lord had promised to cover with gold every drop of blood spilt, whether of their own or their enemy's.

“ Soon Genossa found herself resting by the stranger's side

on the sea-shore, while the black bull pastured near. As soon as the stranger saw the pursuers advancing, he vaulted with Genossa on the back of the bull, who plunged into the blue sea, and soon carried them over to the Grotto of Morgane. Arrived there, the stranger began to caress the maiden ; she shrunk away abashed, and said—

“ ‘Leave off, Spountus.\* I hear my mother weeping and sobbing between the boards of the narrow house.’

“ ‘It is the sighing of the waves in the narrow fissures of the rock, my sweet Genossa.’

“ ‘Listen, listen, Spountus ! my mother speaks from under the consecrated earth !’

“ ‘What says she, then, from under the consecrated earth, Genossa ?’

“ ‘She says that her daughter is not to give herself up body and soul without the show of consecrated altar-lights, and without the priest’s holy chants.’

“ ‘Be it, then, as she wishes, Genossa, my beloved ; I honour the dead !’

“ Then the handsome stranger made a sign, and suddenly there rose out of the darkness priest and choristers, and surrounded the rock that rises in the little island in the midst of the grotto. They covered the rock with a cloth of scarlet silk embroidered in silver, and kindled around it tall wax lights in golden candlesticks. The marriage ceremony began. But at the moment when the priest spoke the blessing, and placed the ring upon her finger, Genossa screamed aloud till the whole grotto rang with the sound. The ring burnt her finger like fire. She tried to tear herself away—to fly, but it was too late ! Spountus seized her arm, and forced her to follow him through long, endlessly long and dismal passages.

\* *Spountus*, the Terrible, is one of the names given to the Evil Spirit by the Armorican Celts.

Her heart died within her, and, trembling and sorrowful, she leaned on the one who had become master of her soul and body.

" 'Listen, Spountus,' whispered she, 'does it not seem as if all around us—here, there, and everywhere—there came the sounds of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ?'

" 'It is nothing, Genossa, my sweet soul, but the workmen who are boring the rock above us, and singing their songs the while.'

" 'Seems it not, Spountus, as though bitter tears were trickling on us down the rocks ?'

" 'It is only the water of the springs that oozes through the rock, Genossa, my sweet soul.'

" 'Lord of my life, the air that surrounds us is like the breath of a furnace !'

" 'Genossa, joy of my heart, look there ! Fire, fire, everywhere fire ! this is hell, heathen maiden, and thou art mine for ever !'"

This is the *Guerz* of Genossa, which must of course lose indescribably by translation, and by the absence of all the circumstances under which I heard it.

We rowed once more in silence round the devil's altar, and by way of dispelling the oppressive and shuddering mood into which the old song had unconsciously plunged me, I inquired whether Spountus were still occasionally to be seen in the grotto. The fisherman did not answer at once, but first with a couple of powerful oar-strokes made the boat shoot out through the entrance of the grotto into the clear daylight and the free expanse of sea. Then he said—

"The gentleman ought to have asked old Judock that question—he knows its answer."

As it was evident that my companion had no pleasure in telling either what he knew or what he thought upon this sub-

ject, and as, moreover, we were suddenly surrounded by a thick fog, occasioning all manner of optical illusions, and requiring his whole attention to be given to the management of the boat, we both continued silent. But after about a quarter of an hour, when a fresh wind rose and drove away the fog, Salaun suddenly touched me on the shoulder, exclaiming—

“Look there!—Judock’s hut is on fire!”

On looking round, I remarked a ruddy light on the Ravens’ Cliff, which was scarcely distinguished from the rosy glow still thrown by the setting sun upon the higher rocks. It was only at intervals that a brighter flame leapt up. Agreeably to my wish, Salaun steered our boat to the spot; curiosity, or the wish to assist, overcoming the repugnance which he had previously shown to the Ravens’ Cliff and to its owner.

As we drew near, we saw a number of men busily engaged about the fire, while numbers more were hurrying towards it in every direction. Having landed, we soon found out that, as is generally the case on such occasions, the greatest part of them, by screams and useless gestures, impeded the assistance that might yet have been afforded. A few only were occupied with the door, which, however, they had vainly tried to break open with the half of a fir-tree stem torn off the roof, while the fire appeared to be devouring slowly the inside of the hut, which had no vent or opening of any kind. On approaching nearer, a loud groaning and whining was distinctly heard within. We listened for a moment; another voice arose, a sharp, mocking tone, which at last broke out into a yell of fiendish laughter. Then hard blows were repeatedly given—then again the same wailing and whimpering, the same mocking rejoinder.

Salaun and the remainder drew back in horror, and a few words spoken half aloud showed that they were in no doubt as to whom the old villain had to deal with, and that, in

their opinion, no human help could avail to deliver him from the grasp of the spirits whom he had served all his life long.

It was in vain that I requested Salaun to join me in an attempt to break open the door.

"This fire is not kindled by mortal hands, and we poor sinners can never put it out."

"The Church will put it out, then," here interfered a deep, well-toned voice.

It was that of a priest who had joined us. All surrounded him, taking off their hats with much respect, while I in a few words explained the state of things. Though advanced in years, he was still strong and active in mind and body. We understood each other instantly. While he sent a messenger to fetch an axe from the nearest village, and gave some other judicious orders, which the people unhesitatingly obeyed, I climbed to the top of the rock into whose fissures the hut was squeezed, that I might thence try to find out whether it had any other opening or not.

I was, however, unable to discover anything of the kind, and was therefore about to descend, when I saw a dark figure glide behind some low bushes at a little distance, but the very same moment it vanished behind the next projection of rock. It had already become too dark, and the apparition was too sudden and momentary, for me to have any distinct impression as to its form or features.

At first, I felt half inclined to pursue it, but after two or three onward steps, I felt convinced that to do so along such a road as this, over such masses of rocks, such crevices, and through such brushwood, would be not only vain, but dangerous. At the same time, too, the strokes of the axe upon the door announced that the chief point—that of forcing an entrance into the hut, would soon be gained, and I therefore rapidly made my way down again.

Just as I arrived, the door gave way. A stream of flame, clouds of smoke, and sparks rushed out, and scared the bystanders away ; but the fury of the fire was already spent, and in a few moments the priest was able to enter, followed by Salaun and myself. The others remained standing outside, partly out of respect to the injunctions of the priest, partly through terror of the things that might have to be encountered within.

The first sight that met our eyes was Judock lying upon the hearth in a pool of blood. He was still alive, and we instantly carried him out into the open air ; and at the earnest entreaty of the priest, the barber of the neighbouring village, who, like the many others, found himself on the spot, undertook to examine, and, as far as he was able, to treat the severely-wounded man. At the same time, all that could be done, was done to save the hut. It was found that all that was combustible was already consumed, and the glowing embers were easily quenched. No trace was found of the perpetrator, or of the cause of the crime, except, indeed, a mattock, which had evidently served to raise the hearthstone, and to dig under it.

That this calamity was not accidental, we none of us had any doubt ; and as I, in company with the priest, again approached the late possessor of the hut, the surgeon, as he called himself, showed us a deep wound in the breast, and a considerable dint in the head of the old Kakous, which could only have been dealt by a murderer's hand.

It was quite plain that no recovery was to be looked for. Before we found the old man, he had bled almost to death, and seemed to have already entirely lost consciousness. But after a few minutes, he came to himself a little, moved his lips, opened his eyes, and tried, with the convulsive energy of a dying effort, to shape his loud groans into intelligible words.

If his appearance had been repulsive in life, it was now almost insufferably horrible. At length, he was able to make it understood that he wished to confess. The bystanders seemed to look upon such a request not only with wonder, but displeasure, as involving unheard-of presumption, and actual desecration of the rite. But the priest knelt down at once by the head of the dying man, and at a sign from him, the people reverentially retired, the greatest part evincing their sympathy with the solemn occasion by kneeling also, with heads uncovered, and hands folded in silent prayer.

The moon had by this time risen, and spread a mild, peaceful light on the shore, the rocks, and the sea, whose low murmur the solemn stillness of the men, so loud a few minutes before, rendered more impressive. The silence was only broken every now and then by the increasingly painful groans of the dying man, or by an outburst of sparks, as some remnants of the wood-work within the hut, or rather the cleft that it formerly occupied, fell in.

After a few minutes, the priest beckoned me to approach. He had, according to his apprehension of the duties of his calling, endeavoured, before all things, to awaken the feeble consciousness of the expiring sinner to the necessity of preparing for death after the manner of the Catholic Church, as far as it was possible to do so under such circumstances. But when this was over, he was anxious to make an attempt to elicit some words which might lead to the discovery of the murderer; and it was with this view that he wished to have me both as assistant and witness—and also called old Sallau.

The dying man's words were for the most part incoherent, and spoken in an unintelligible voice; but, however, such as they were, they tended to confirm a suspicion that had already crossed my mind, and led me to connect the mysterious pre-

sence in the hut, of the youth called Bauzec, on the occasion of my first visit, with the apparition I had just witnessed on the rocks above. In the mind of the dying man, shaken as it was by the death-struggle, and the terrors of conscience, the same opinion evidently often obtained respecting the personality of his murderer, which the people are wont to offer in connexion with the most varied circumstances, namely, that the Evil One had surprised him counting his ill-won wealth, and asserted his own claim to it.

But every now and then the recollection of the true state of the case would pierce through, as he repeated—

“The Vermin! the Black! the Vermin!” over and over again, with such rage and abhorrence, that his energies seemed more and more exhausted by each repetition of the words, and at last he died in pronouncing them.

It was to me a very significant fact, that Judock should, in his wanderings, use many common English phrases, which rendered it beyond a doubt that he had carried on treasonable communications with the enemy during the war, and it was with these that the criminal prosecutions already referred to were connected.

The priest and Salaun shared my conviction. But when I exclaimed with horror—

“The son the murderer of the father!” the fisherman rejoined—

“It is bad enough as it is, but Bauzec the Black is not the son of Judock Shipwreck. I myself saw him draw the fellow with his hook out of the hen-coop of a ship that had gone to pieces. He knew best what wind had driven it upon the Ravens’ Cliff. And then the little black imp sat upon the coop, and was scarcely on shore before he shook off the water like a poodle, and danced and screamed, so that it was awful to see him. But as he had been almost drowned, the country

people called him ‘Bauzec,’ which means in the gentleman’s language, ‘the drowned one.’ ”

“Judock, then, adopted him as a son?” asked I. “That is more than I should have believed of him.”

“That was not the case either,” replied Salaun, “but just the contrary. The boy hung upon the old man like a chain; hooked himself to him like a kitten. He could neither be shaken off nor driven away by blows, kicks, or hunger—he always returned. If Judock had flung him out at night, and driven him far away across the downs, believing that he would not find his way back; when morning came, there he was again cowering at the door. But you are not to suppose that gratitude or attachment had anything to do with this. On the contrary, from the very first he took to playing all manner of tricks upon the old man; and if he ever failed to get out of the way of blows with cat-like expertness, and chanced to be caught, which was rare, he would bite and scratch like a young wild beast. It really seemed as though he were an evil spirit, and had a hold over the old sinner’s soul. At all events, he was obliged to tolerate what he could not avoid. For, you see, he was grown old and feeble, and had besides, a horror of the lad, whom he never called by any other name than the ‘vermin;’ or else what could have prevented him from tying a stone about his neck and throwing him into the sea? Certainly it was not conscience or tender-heartedness, for”—

Here Salaun interrupted himself.

“The Kakous is now dead, and has to give an account of himself elsewhere, and so I will say no more about him. We poor folk about here have never doubted that Bauzec was given to Judock Shipwreck as a plague and a punishment—whether man or devil, it’s all one.”

Meanwhile the corpse had been carried into the burnt-out

hut, and a watch over it appointed for the night. We at length contrived, by the light of the tapers brought, to discover a narrow opening at the end of the fissure, which wound up to the top of the cliff, and opened out amidst the brushwood there. This might possibly have afforded an inlet to a slender and active youth. But how it happened that the builder and owner of the hut should not have been aware of this way of entrance, or how, on the other hand, he should not have stopped it up, fearing that his good-for-nothing comrade might learn to make use of it without his leave, and probably to his hurt, this certainly did remain a mystery to us.

Midnight was already past before the country people dispersed, and I again took my place in the boat, to be rowed by the old fisherman to his own dwelling. We were both silent, meditating, no doubt, upon what we had just witnessed. We now approached the little bay in which Salaun's cottage stood, and by the unsteady and changing light of the clouded moon were already able to distinguish it, when we heard a loud cry for help proceeding thence. The next moment, two figures rushed out on the shore, and struggled violently—or rather, one struggled to overpower the other, who endeavoured to escape, and cried more and more loudly for help.

"God be with me!" exclaimed Salaun at the first scream heard, "it is Dinorah's voice!"

And straining his strength to the utmost, he made the little boat bound to the point where we saw the two forms, while we both announced the approach of help, and endeavoured to frighten away the assailant by raising our voices to their utmost pitch. But owing to the murmurs of the waves upon the beach, and to the excitement of the parties concerned, they did not observe us till we were but a few yards from the shore, when we plainly distinguished not only Dinorah, but

also the aggressor, who was no other than Bauzec the Black. We further observed that the young girl's strength was nearly exhausted. Dinorah was the first to perceive us. At once she tore herself out of her assailant's grasp, and rushed towards us into the sea.

Her father had hardly time to check the boat's speed, so as to prevent a collision, when, breathless, exhausted, with torn garment and streaming hair, she clasped the boat's prow, and was lifted into it and carried to shore in an unconscious state. Meanwhile, Bauzec had vanished; and it would have been in vain to have pursued him, had we not, besides, been fully occupied with the poor girl.

Thanks to her thoroughly healthy nature, she soon came round, and told us—but not without a certain reserve, and an evident endeavour to criminate the ruffian as little as possible—that Bauzec had, about half an hour before, in great haste and excitement, joined her on the shore, whither she had gone to look for us. He had told her, in the strangest and wildest way possible, that he must leave the country forthwith, and that she must accompany him. Upon her refusal, he at first tried every means of persuasion, and showed her his hands full of gold. But when she remained firm, and again hastened out of the cottage, whither he had followed her, and rushed to the shore, he tried to carry her away by force.

"And then I cried once more out of my inmost soul to my heavenly god-mother, and you came, father!" said the girl in conclusion. And the joy that beamed over her features at the miraculous help which she fully believed to have been afforded her, banished every trace of her previous terror.

Soon, however, on learning from us what had happened at the Ravens' Cliff, and recognising, as we did also, in her late experience a confirmation of the blood-guiltiness of her wild

lover, she was seized with a profound and peculiar emotion. She became pale as death; trembled in every limb, and threw herself upon her knees, where she long remained in fervent prayer.

Could the miller, Guiller, have had some grounds, then, for rallying her about this wild, repulsive, wicked youth? What relations could there possibly be between him and this pure and maidenly creature? A few words, however, exchanged upon a later occasion with the priest whose acquaintance I had made at Ravens' Cliff, afforded me the only explanation conceivable. Her feeling was a complex one, consisting in part, of womanly compassion for one whom all the world, and perhaps with good cause, avoided; in part, of a certain dread of the youth's savage strength, not entirely free, it might be, from a germ of unconscious admiration of it; in part, of blended piety and vanity, such as one often meets with in more refined society. She had believed herself elected, by the assistance and to the glory of her heavenly sponsor, to convert this poor benighted soul.

And upon Bauzec's part, joined to the impulse of passions early wakened, there was doubtless a better and deeper impression made by the maidenly gentleness and purity of Dinorah. Wild and scornful as he was to all besides, and in outward appearance to her also, it is certain that she had obtained a degree of influence over him, which she, in her half-childish way, took pleasure in displaying.

All this, as I have already said, I only found out later. At the period of which I treat, I contented myself with leaving the father and daughter together, and betaking myself to rest in the fragrant hay-loft under the roof, which was the room assigned to me.

When I awoke the following morning, the sun was already high in the heavens: nothing seemed stirring in the house,

or round about it. I only heard the monotonous breaking of the waves upon the shore, and the twittering of birds between. I found the little room below in the best order possible, and even my clean and simple breakfast ready provided ; but Salaun and his daughter were nowhere to be seen.

I knew too well the rights with which the inhabitants of Brittany invest the stranger—whom they designate as the *sent of God*—not to avail myself, even in the absence of the host, of the hospitality of which I stood so sorely in need. But before setting out, I laid down a gold piece upon the table, which I could hardly have got old Salaun to accept had he been at home.

I took the way to Crozon, and had not proceeded far before I heard in the distance a solemn chant, which drew nearer and nearer to where I was. On account of the very high hedges which shut in the road, I was unable as yet to see any of the singers, even though I could distinctly hear the words of their song. A peasant who came from Crozon informed me, however, that it was a procession, undertaken by all the adjacent parishes on account of the long-continued drought, and that it was marching around the fields, chanting, and offering up prayers for rain.

From a little hillock on the roadside which I ascended, I succeeded in seeing the procession, which soon, however, defiled along a cross-way, and came into the road. First came the priest, then the men, two and two ; afterwards the women, in their picturesque Sunday costume, but with grave bearing, and absorbed in deep devotion.

In the pauses of the chant, which were devoted to prayer, nothing was to be heard but the humming of insects and the chirping of birds.

One of these pauses was suddenly interrupted by a noise, which proceeded from the direction in which I had come. It

was made by the rolling and rattling of a vehicle of some kind ; and soon we could see in the lane behind us a cart, surrounded by armed custom-house officers, as well as by some fishers and peasants. The procession drew to one side to let them pass.

As the cart approached, we observed that three men were sitting upon the same seat, and that the one in the middle was chained, the other two evidently guarding him. Soon the name " Bauzec the Black," which, spoken low, went from one to the other throughout the procession, left no doubt upon my mind that it was the murderer on his way to prison. Indeed he himself took good care to give me every opportunity of recognising him ; for scarcely had the cart come up with the procession, than he raised himself from the stooping attitude he had before maintained, looked around him with the greatest audacity, and called out, to such as he was acquainted with, words of jesting or abuse, so that the good people seemed at first quite petrified by his profligacy. However, when the universal horror and displeasure had found a vent in ejaculations and execrations, he seemed to take even increased delight in his own lawless conduct, and was not to be controlled by his companions.

But in the midst of his most daring defiance, he suddenly uttered a cry of mingled rage and anguish ; and after one violent effort to break his chains, suddenly sank down powerless, with his head bowed on his breast and his eyes closed.

The reason of this transformation was soon evident to me. The cart had passed the men, and reached the part of the procession formed by the women. There stood Dinorah, pale as a corpse, her little hands convulsively clasped, her lips quivering, but with a look of the deepest sorrow in her eyes, as she fixed them upon the lost being before her. When this look met his, all his wild audacity was at once at an end.

The procession again put itself, singing, into motion, and was soon lost in a byway behind the bushes; while the cart with the prisoner went on its way to Crozon, where I arrived soon after it, but was not able to remain. After a while, the newspapers gave me an account of Bauzec's execution.

Many years afterwards, on visiting a friend at Brest who occupied a position in its largest hospital, I recognised in one of the *Sœurs grises*, to whom the care of its sick was intrusted, the Virgin's god-daughter, Dinorah.













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